

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

No. 429 Fifth Week Hilary Term 2021

IN this issue of *Oxford Magazine* Gill Evans points to a paradox (p9). On the one hand the making available (though behind SSO) of the minutes of the Silver and Bronze groups responsible for formulating policy during Covid is a model of openness, allowing staff to find out what the committees are doing in a reasonable amount of detail. On the other hand—as regards University affairs in general and as exemplified by the way that staff and Congregation were left out of the recent decision to end printing of the *Gazette* (see: Editorial, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 428, 2nd week, HT 2021)—internal communication is being run, in effect, by means of press releases supplemented by occasional all-staff emails and Q&As by senior University officers, a trend that has been evident for some time now.

Easy access to adequately detailed information relating to the generation and approval of new policies is a fundamental prerequisite for genuine democratic self-governance, as embodied in Congregation. As we pointed out in our last editorial (for the umpteenth time) Congregation is a meaningless institution if it cannot know, in advance and in a timely fashion, about impending

Scrutinising Scrutiny

ing policy decisions so that it is in a position, where appropriate, to call for a debate and subject the issues to scrutiny. The recent trends in internal communication effectively incapacitate Congregation.

The *Gazette* is a crucial link in the fragile chain of communication on which Congregation depends; it is the one place where Congregation members are given notice of Council decisions with a two week opportunity to oppose or amend. An article in our last issue (*Oxford Magazine*, No.

428, 2nd week, HT 2021, pp 12-14) brought to light the absence of any formal requirements within the Regulations to determine what is or is not necessarily published in the *Gazette* and on the record. The only specified obligation on Council in the Statutes (XVI A.4) is a requirement to seek Congregation's approval for changes of use of land or floor space over a certain size. Thus, for example, the allocation for spaces within the Schwarzman Centre (e.g. for a concert hall, black box theatre, etc) did not need Congregation approval or any prior notice.

The *Gazette* exemplifies the problem at the heart of our communication system. In many respects like *Blueprint*, the contents of the *Gazette* are an arbitrary

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

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...and much more

collation (a haphazard collection of items including commercial adverts), determined by custom but with the historical record of Congregation's Acta at its centre. But, most crucially, there is no reliable and consistent mechanism for advance warning of impending policy changes. Only selected policies appear in the form of ready-made Council Regulations and Resolutions for statute change. In exercising democratic self-governance Congregation must, in principle, be able freely to investigate any areas of policy that might potentially be of concern—namely, for want of a better word, exercise 'scrutiny'.

* * *

As Sophie Marnette points out in a letter in this issue, there are two mechanisms (Congregation apart) that serve in the role of scrutiny; i.e. as independent reviewers of University policies with sufficient powers to have full access to all the information they might require and request. Each year three of our colleagues, as Proctors and Assessor, get to sit in on the entire range of University committees. Arriving as observers new to the scene, they can, and do, take a fresh and objective view of our decision-making processes. Their impressions are briefly, but often revealingly, recorded in their Demitting Oration in the *Gazette*.

But the primary constitutional mechanism is the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. 'Scrutiny' was added to the name of the existing Audit Committee at the time of the governance debates in 2005-6, when the idea of adopting a structure comparable to Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny was rejected (see: *Oxford Magazine*, No.411, 0th Week, MT 2019, pp8-11 for details). In contrast to the arrangements in Oxford the Board of Scrutiny publishes lengthy reports each year (in the *Reporter*); these reports are automatically discussed, on the record, by the Regent House, and Council is obligated to respond (again in writing in the *Reporter*) to both the report and the debate (see: Evans letter below). Over the years the Board of Scrutiny has successfully revealed a number of unsuspected risks, most notably warning of a catastrophically failing financial management system ("CAPSA").

Ever since its inception it has been unclear whether the Audit and Scrutiny Committee could perform the double act required. During the governance debates in 2005 it was pointed out that: "an Audit Committee scrutinises on behalf of the Council to which it reports. A Board of Scrutiny by contrast would scrutinise on behalf of Congregation as a whole. The accountability relationships involved are quite simply different".

At a Discussion in Congregation in 2017 on the role of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee (*Gazette*, 21st June 2017, Suppl (1) to No 5173, Vol 147) a long-serving demitting committee member reported that: "Overall, I believe that we have been reasonably effective on audit and its implications. In scrutiny, I think our effectiveness is a bit more questionable". According to another member: "in practice the majority of issues which the committee considers fall under the 'audit' heading and only rarely are they dealt with formally as 'scrutiny' matters". The

Discussion meeting was attended by less than a dozen members of Congregation; such is the level of interest—and understanding—within the University concerning the functioning of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 389, 5th Week, MT 2017).

Last December (*Gazette*, 10th December 2020, No 5297, Vol 151) the remit of the committee was amended as follows (new text underlined):

"8.7. The committee shall provide independent assurance to assist Council in fulfilling Council's responsibilities for ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's arrangements for risk management; control; governance; compliance with the legal and regulatory framework the University operates within (this includes the culture and behaviour that is prevalent within the institution and arrangements that can affect reputation); ethical and other behaviours, including whistleblowing; sustainability and economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money); and the management and quality assurance of data submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency ("HESA"), the Student Loans Company, and to the Office for Students and the other funding bodies."

Now the scope of the committee's responsibilities appears almost limitless; but good luck to its nine members in monitoring our "culture"!

The key questions, however, are these: in practice is the committee doing anything more than ticking 'compliance' boxes in its auditing role and, as distinct from that, is it scrutinising? Its own definition of scrutiny is as follows: "8.8. (1); the committee defines scrutiny as the process of structured inquiry or investigation into failures or alleged failures of the University's operations." Surely, on any reasonable interpretation, the committee would need to investigate failures or alleged failures in operations in order to sign off its compliance boxes? More importantly, this definition misses the key aspect of scrutiny that distinguishes it from audit, namely that its investigating is an independent check on Council and conducted in the name of Congregation. That is hard to do when most members of the committee are Council members or Council-appointed.

But the most critical test of whether scrutiny is taking place is the availability of the evidence. Originally notices (of the annual or specific audit reports) appeared in the *Gazette*; this practice ceased some years ago. The committee's most recent 2-page retrospective annual report (available on the Intranet behind SSO) does not refer to scrutiny as such. Earlier Annual Reports appear to be unavailable by way of the Intranet. There is, therefore, no concrete evidence of scrutiny having taken place as distinct from audit. And even if it has, its rationale (to investigate on behalf of Congregation) is negated by the fact that Congregation would have found it so difficult to know, in a timely fashion, that an investigation was happening, or what the findings were.

Yet again Oxford's culture of secrecy serves to make Congregation impotent. Cambridge's scrutiny processes are all on the open web, entirely open to the public. Whether Oxford has scrutiny at all is impossible to tell given the general inaccessibility of any relevant evidence.

B.B, T.J.H

Launching the new campus universities of the 1960s

– Utopian visions and the work of an Oxford hero

JILL PELLEW

DURING the current disquiet about British universities—about what they do and do not offer their students, how satisfactorily they are managed for the benefit of their academics, the nature of their funding and their ‘business models’—it is worth casting back to what is probably the last, albeit brief, era of confidence and optimism in the founding of new universities.

The post-war era, up to and including the decade of the 1960s, was a remarkable period of public investment globally in higher education when some 200 new campuses were established across the globe.¹ Different rationales of course influenced national moves to discard legacies of the past—not least the end of colonialism. But common themes of optimism, vision and experimentation were everywhere evident: how to design new campuses; what were the best modes of pedagogy; what should form the curricula for students. In the Anglophone world an important aspect of this phenomenon was state planning and funding. This was certainly the case in Britain where the state—specifically the Treasury—played a key role in the planning and setting up of the nine new universities between 1961 and 1968 that became known variously as the ‘new universities of the 1960s’, ‘the plate-glass universities’, and recently as ‘the utopian universities’. What, then, were the constitutional circumstances, and who were the individuals that came together in the 1950s and sparked the creation of these nine institutions? And what dimmed the excitement of optimists, visionaries and experimenters involved in their creation within less than a decade?

Broadly speaking, the founding of these universities grew out of the global catastrophe of world war during which social thinkers had tried to define what kind of society the country was fighting for. The 1944 Butler Education Act formed a significant pillar of Beveridge’s Welfare State in systematising the provision of free secondary school education. This signalled unprecedented state expenditure in an area of great social importance and was to have profound effects on higher education. It was a period when leading academics, many of whom had played significant roles in the war, were respected as part of the Establishment and expected to play a major part in working out solutions to national education challenges. They responded with intellectual excitement and practical vigour.

An immediately perceived challenge was the country’s need—as it faced the growing politico-military issues of the Cold War—for highly educated scientists and technologists. This need was addressed in 1946 by a senior Treasury body, the Barlow Committee.² (Committees—national, local and institutional—are a *leitmotiv* of this story.) One of its members was Professor Solly Zuckerman (1904–1993), a leading wartime adviser on military and air force strategy, who was then Professor of Anatomy at the University of Birmingham. Barlow outcomes included major government investment in Imperial

College of Science and Technology, much of it structural in order to allow for the required student and academic expansion which took place in the early 1960s. Further central investment was committed to the upgrading of science and technology facilities and equipment in thirteen major universities. The report also contributed to the expansion of technical courses at further education colleges in major urban centres, designated ‘Colleges of Advanced Technology’ (CATs) in anticipation of their becoming an important element of higher education.

The other educational challenge was presented by the famous ‘bulge’—the expansion of post-war families whose ablest children had begun to enter the sixth forms of the new selective grammar schools and were now prospective university entrants. Opportunities were strictly limited: in 1953/4 a mere 80,602, or 0.16% of the total population was enrolled in a university. Local education officials were already well aware of the problem. One or two became activists, working with senior colleagues in their local councils to press for their cities to host a new university.³ The existing situation was blatantly inadequate to meet future needs, as John Fulton, later the founding Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex, observed in 1956. The country desperately needed graduates

‘...to teach in schools; to fill posts in public administration and in industry; to man the social services; to supply scientific and technical manpower...[T]he universities have nowadays the duty of educating a great number of others...who would be unable without a university education to learn the skills through which they are going to serve society.’⁴

Yet it was a long stretch from articulating this urgent necessity to assessing precisely what would be required in terms of enlarging university capacity, securing the necessary exchequer and political agreement, and then implementing such a remit. What became clear was that, unlike the 12 civic universities that had been founded largely through local initiative over the half century prior to World War II, a post-war scheme of national expansion would depend on the Treasury as paymaster and require central planning. It would also need input from influential academics in existing universities, the imprimatur of the political leadership and Parliament, as well as enthusiastic interest from local authorities. In 1950s post-war Britain, social and professional networks across these elements of society were strong and had often been enhanced through wartime experience.

At that time the British university landscape comprised the ancient universities (Oxford, Cambridge, the four Scottish universities), Durham, the collegiate University of London, the federal University of Wales, Queen’s University Belfast and the twelve ‘civic’ universities. In addition there was one striking outlier: the new University of Keele founded in 1949 by A.D. Lindsay (former Master of Balliol College, Oxford) with pioneering ideals. Debate

revolved around fundamental issues. Would expansion occur solely by enlarging existing universities or in new, tailor-made ones? If the latter, where would they be and what would they look like? Would they follow the civic pattern, starting as university colleges tied to the University of London degree, or (like Keele) as autonomous institutions? At the core of the debate was the University Grants Committee, a standing government agency within the purview of Treasury responsibility. Since its creation in 1919 the UGC had played an increasing role not simply in handling the contributory central funding but also in the oversight of all British universities in receipt of that tax-payer contribution. With post-war acceptance that this sector was a national responsibility, the UGC role in the planning and development of universities became pivotal.

In 1952 one of the visionary heroes of this story was appointed its Chairman, a position he retained for ten years. This was Keith Murray, a high achieving Scot, a respected Oxford agricultural economist, who had undertaken valuable war work as director of food and agriculture in the Middle East Supply Centre. In 1944 (in his absence) he was elected Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford by a fellowship grateful for his having transformed the college's finances as its bursar.⁵ Once at the UGC, an expansionist by nature, he made full use of its enhanced post-war powers. Although a promoter of innovation and fresh thinking, Murray nevertheless held traditional values that underpinned British universities – not least the protection of academic freedom through their autonomous status. Above all, he ‘attached an enormous amount of importance to qualitative change’.⁶

His Committee over the decade numbered some fifteen to twenty members, including distinguished academics from across the disciplines, the occasional industrialist, some leading local authority educationalists, and several stalwart heads of girls' schools or colleges. It met in London, on average just over nine times a year. Murray dominated the thinking.⁷ There was, of course, ongoing debate with existing universities, controversy with senior Treasury figures about the overall requirement of university places and the financing of major university expansion, and dialogue with lobbyists from localities that saw themselves as hosts. Increasingly convinced – way ahead of his Treasury masters – of the urgent need for new institutions, in 1957 Murray and his team actively engaged with the pressing (and well formulated) claims of Brighton and Sussex, that had been doggedly pursued by local activists since a visit to the UGC in 1947.

The strength and composition of local pressure groups were important to Murray. Well aware of the history of the English civic universities whose foundation and ‘take off’ had depended on local enthusiasm, energy and money, Murray sought these features as essential starting conditions.⁸ Despite unprecedented central government investment, local authorities and individuals were going to have to provide some capital support. Also, there existed a UGC mind-set in favour of diverse income streams for universities. At that time few were concerned about potential long-term problems that might emerge from the reliance of universities, far more than ever before, on central government as their dominant paymaster: threats to academic freedom or the lack of long-term sustainability. After all, it was an optimistic post-war socialist society that believed that taxes were the only realistic way of pay-

ing for a major educational experiment. However, Murray himself may have sensed a danger perceived in the very early days of the UGC of over-reliance on public sources of funding.⁹ Such instincts morphed into what became UGC requirements from local bidders: land in the form of a suitable site of 150-200 acres; a recurrent local authority grant for some years; and demonstration of local financial support in a fundraising appeal. The instrument for working out these commitments with the UGC, and embedding the new institutions into the community, was the local ‘Promotion Committee’.

Early in 1957 the Treasury indicated that it was prepared to support the UGC recommendation that conditions had been met in Brighton's case and gave approval in principle for a ‘university college of Sussex’. The following year its founding Vice-Chancellor, John Fulton, was appointed. Parliamentary approval was announced by the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, along with a forward spending commitment for an enlarged universities budget for 1960-63 based on an increase in student places considerably less than recommended by the UGC but as large as a reluctant Treasury would concede. The background was a battle between Murray, convinced of the serious inadequacy of student places, and the dominant senior Treasury official in control of public expenditure, Sir R.W.B. (Otto) Clarke. As a result, in mid-1959 Murray set up and chaired a powerful UGC ‘Sub-Committee on New University Colleges’ that began to investigate expansion possibilities with existing universities as well as proposals for new institutions. By this time the UGC was forecasting a need for as many as 200,000 new places within a decade – growth that could not possibly be met from within the existing universities. It was clear that further new institutions were going to be needed.¹⁰

That summer, Murray visited York as another potential host candidate and was captivated by the promoters and their proposition. He was attracted by the sense of history and culture that he encountered, and he reacted very positively to the welcome from the York Academic Trust that would be the promoting body. He was also impressed by the offer of a possible site to include Heslington Hall.¹¹ Meanwhile, the sub-committee's investigations of other putative sites came up with the following possibilities: Norwich, Gloucestershire, Kent, Coventry and Essex. For the time being York and Norwich, as the most advanced claimants, were encouraged to proceed with their proposals.

In March 1960 the findings of the UGC Sub-Committee's report was emphatically set out in a long memo, concluding with a strong, closely-argued case for new universities in both York and Norwich.¹² Treasury acceptance was announced within a month in Parliament. The following year four other English locations for new universities were announced: Essex, Kent, Warwick and Lancaster. This announcement preceded the setting up of the Robbins inquiry into the pattern of full-time higher education in Britain (with which Murray was closely involved) and meant that by 1965 seven new universities in England had impressive Vice-Chancellors, were chartered and had opened their doors to a new student intake.¹³

Once a university had been announced the local promotion committee acted as ‘the first proto-council of the University’. The status of the Chairman was important for raising money. (The Chairman of Warwick, adjacent to the heart of the Midlands business community, was Lord

Rootes, a ‘super-salesman’.¹⁴) Membership was large, including leading education officers, city dignitaries, local business leaders, churchmen, prominent professional men and women. So a small steering committee tended to be appointed to expedite business such as liaising with the UGC. As Murray anticipated, the advantage of such sponsorship, apart from promising a welcome for a prominent new local institution, was financial. At Sussex, for example, the Corporation offered a site of 200 acres on the former home of the earls of Chichester; at East Anglia (as Norwich became in 1959) the city council pledged a site of 165 acres and the county and borough councils an annual contribution of £54,000.

As soon as these universities had been publicly announced, there was extensive ‘chit chat’ in common rooms and at high tables in existing universities – not least Cambridge and Oxford – about potential developments: about Vice-Chancellors, academic leadership, scope of studies, pedagogy, and so on and so on... One source indicates that Murray may have felt somewhat out of control, preferring to have these matters seriously discussed within the framework of UGC-appointed Academic Planning Boards (APBs).¹⁵ These bodies – described by one new Vice-Chancellor as ‘a kind of enlightened academic cartel’ – consisted of seven or eight distinguished academics, from a cross-section of disciplines.¹⁶ Sir Solly Zuckerman, for example, was part of the APB for UEA; Lionel (by then Lord) Robbins was Chair of the York APB. At Essex the Chair was Noel Annan (Provost of King’s College, Cambridge), who set out its priorities in his first report to Murray:

‘1. To consider arrangements by which the Universities may be assured of the maintenance of satisfactory academic standards...on the assumption that it will award its own first and higher degrees

2. To consider the range of subjects to be studied at the University.

3. To prepare a petition for a Royal Charter...and to select, in consultation with local sponsors, persons to be named in those documents as the first governing body of the University

4. To select the first Vice-Chancellor and, with his advice, professors of the principal subjects’¹⁷

Each of these seven institutions (along with those at Stirling and Ulster which came later) naturally developed their own characteristics and ethos. But there were common themes. One thing those powerful individuals were quite clear about: their new universities would be ‘unfettered in...decisions about degree structures and courses’. With a slightly stuttering start (for example with Sussex’s initial designation as the ‘university college of Sussex’), all these universities received their charters as fully-fledged degree-awarding bodies.

They were all intended to be residential ‘self-governing communities of learning’, designed (like the pioneering Keele) to attract students from across the country who would closely share with their teachers an attractive campus on the outskirts of cities where adequate space was accessible for this vision. While well aware of the imperative to site new institutions within regions poorly served by universities, Murray was personally attracted by historic cultural locations as the first three attested: Sussex, York,

East Anglia (in Norwich). The opportunities of creating the architectural design of such large-scale post-war public enterprises stimulated well-known architects to wrestle with ‘form and function’ challenges: how to reflect a university’s academic purposes in its teaching spaces, social facilities, living accommodation and communication lines; how (if at all) to relate the new peripheral institutions with their host cities; how to create lasting monuments. The choice of initial architect was that of the Vice-Chancellors together with his advisory board and, in the long run, turned out to be significant for the visual identity of their institutions, particularly in the case of Basil Spence’s administrative buildings at Sussex, Denys Lasdun’s student residences at UEA and Kenneth Capon’s tall residential towers at Essex.

The UGC had stated that ‘the most important factor’ in siting these newcomers to the university landscape was the ability of the location to attract staff of quality.¹⁸ These burgeoning institutions did, indeed, attract ‘quality’ academics from the leadership (the Vice-Chancellors and their deans) downwards. Some were reacting against features of the civic universities, in particular the silo structure of disciplines, over-specialisation and hierarchical governance. (‘Barnacles had grown on the hulls of those graceful Victorian yachts’ as Annan later put it).¹⁹ Refugees from Oxford and Cambridge were attracted by potential freedom from the inflexibility of single-subject honours courses. Many simply sensed the sea-change in higher education and were drawn by the excitement of designing the famous Asa Briggs ‘new map of learning’.

A strong influence in designing this map came from America where – as is clear from membership of the key committees – several academics had studied and taught. Murray himself had gained his doctorate at Cornell as a Commonwealth Fund Fellow. Curriculum design involved the concept of crossing intellectual boundaries in both sciences and the humanities. ‘Schools’ of study became fashionable – at Sussex the School of European Studies, at UEA the School of Biological Sciences – headed by a new senior authority, the Dean. A quickening sensitivity to the structure of societies led to the development of sociology, while the need to equip students for new types of post-war careers encouraged the development of social studies and business management. New thinking about pedagogy led to seminar classes (with highly favourable student-staff ratios) and having course work contribute to the final degree.²⁰

The excitement of experiment is evident from contemporary sources. The public spotlight shone particularly brightly on the initial three campuses, with press coverage of fashionable early undergraduates. The Vice-Chancellor of Essex, Albert Sloman, focused positively on the whole experiment in his Reith Lectures of 1963. It was the year that the Robbins Report was published (and accepted by the Macmillan government), fully endorsing the expansion of universities and arguing for further momentum, as a result of which two more new British universities were created – at Stirling and Ulster (in 1967 and ‘68) – as well as addressing the need for more science and technology graduates partly by recommending raising the status of ten CATs to universities. The middle years of the 60’s was, in some ways, the high point of this decade of achievement in which Murray was so influential.

Yet even at this point concerns that had serious implications were being discussed. Above all, the issue of Britain’s

lack of technological institutions, along the lines of the German *Technische Hochschulen*, let alone an outstanding leader like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was a serious omission insufficiently addressed by the rise in status of the CATs.²¹ The whole Murray approach to the positioning of the new universities in the context of culturally-oriented towns rather than in industrial centres meant that there was little chance that they would be specifically science-focused. None of them engaged with Big Science, 'the organisation of scientific research in managed teams working with large-scale and expensive, centralized instruments and facilities'.²² A different debate, stimulated partly by the publication of Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, arose about the meritocratic principle underlying the secondary school and university systems.²³ The network of Great and Good decision-makers, of which Murray was one, was professionally and academically limited. Annan himself, in retrospect, regretted that the Robbins Committee had been dominated by university academics, given that its remit included the *whole* of higher education.²⁴

Harold Wilson's Labour government took a wholly new tack with higher education. In the first place the UGC was transferred to the Department of Education from its privileged semi-distanced position at the Treasury, thereby exposing university funding to greater democratic accountability as the quinquennial block grants to universities were scrutinised by Parliament. Secondly, Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Education created a parallel but separate system with the development of the polytechnics, funded by local authorities. This 'binary system' that emerged until 1992 was contrary to Robbins's recommendations for a 'co-ordinated system of higher education [that] should eliminate artificial differences of status'.

Over time the localities' direct financial contributions to the new universities declined considerably and, indeed, became negligible compared with central government support—a direction in the balance of funding of which Murray would not have approved.²⁵ Once these enterprises acquired inner momentum and expanded in size and complexity, the consequences of their growth were startling to many in communities that had originally welcomed their foundation. It was perhaps inevitably the student unrest, roughly between 1968 and 1973, that led to the disenchantment of local communities with their universities. Protest took various forms, echoing both international political causes across American, German and French campuses, as well as contesting more mundane local issues such as rights of representation on university committees. Vice-Chancellors were caught unawares and were ill-prepared to face hostile elements of local communities historically unfamiliar with university culture and appalled at the perceived waste of tax-payers' money funding recalcitrant students at a time when a growing downturn in the national economy was becoming apparent.

These storms were ridden out. Compromises were made in response to student demands that came to be regarded as reasonable by university authorities faced, from 1969, with the lowering of the age of majority from 21 to 18 and all that this implied about a new generation with democratic power. The historian of UEA writes about 'a more optimistic mood in the university in the 1970s and easier relations with the student body'.²⁶ Yet these years

had marked an interesting watershed. Gone was the deference of a generation born during the 1940s who had worn ties and gowns to lectures, who naturally respected their teachers. It was a deference that had been appreciated by those local leaders—the hierarchy of lords lieutenant and other dignitaries—that had sought to enhance their localities with new universities. The optimism with which they had been founded disappeared; and a new climate of opinion emerged in which government financial cuts of increasing severity to higher education budgets became publicly acceptable. This became apparent when the allocation of the 1972-77 quinquennium grant to universities was being discussed, indicating staff cuts and considerably worsening staff-student ratios. The basic Exchequer grant was seriously eroded by the raging inflation of those years, exacerbated by the 1973 oil price rise. The whole pattern of

*'measured quinquennial grants and planning that had shaped university finance since 1919...broke down under the extraordinary inflation of 1974-75 and 1979-80. It destroyed the possibility of planning on anything more than an annual basis.... There was not yet the nightmare of coping with inflation with diminishing absolute sums. That was to come in the 1980s...'*²⁷

In 1983, when 2,000 academic staff were cut as financial support for the university sector was reduced by 15 per cent, Annan wrote that this had 'brought an end to the whole Robbins era'.²⁸

We must not forget that this whole story is relatively small-scale on several fronts. First, in terms purely of student numbers, the British 'utopian universities' made surprisingly little impact. By 1970/1 the total number of students at our nine universities plus the University of Keele was only 9.3% of the total UK student population of 235,556. Even by 1990/1 the equivalent percentage was only 14%. That was just before the 1992 translation of the polytechnics to university status, let alone the Blair government's aim to extend higher education to some 50% of student-age young people. Secondly, the protagonists of this story came from what to our present era of inclusivity seems an anachronistically limited background. Highly educated mostly at the same institutions, not least the ancient UK universities, many were public figures in a small Establishment world. They mostly shared intellectual values (values of the Robbins era—indeed of the UGC era, going back to 1919) even though many transferred their teaching and learning to the new campuses in minor rebellion against the academic patterns of older establishments. The movers and shakers were overwhelmingly male, largely born between the turn of the 20th century and the end of World War I.

Yet despite these limitations, one must admire Murray and his idealist colleagues in this enterprise. As Edward Boyle, Financial Secretary to the Treasury during the critical years 1959-62, later commented: 'It seemed the right moment to launch a number of brand new universities, not simply to correct injustice, but also in order to seize the opportunities of an hour that seemed uniquely full of hope'.²⁹ For a spark was lit; the doors of new learning opened; much academic and cultural work emerged; and students were engaged in a new way. Moreover, these particular universities have not only survived for almost 60 years but are all well regarded today—one or two in the current top bracket of esteem, even after having to

adapt to new models of ‘academic capitalism’ that would be quite alien to Keith Murray.

¹ Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor (eds.), *Utopian Universities: A Global History of the New Campuses of the 1960s* (Bloomsbury, 2020), Introduction.

² Report of (Barlow) Committee on Scientific Manpower, 1946, Cmd.6824.

³ Local activists included W.G. Stone, Director of Education for the Borough of Brighton, and Lincoln Ralphs, Chief Education Officer for Norfolk County Council.

⁴ J.Fulton, ‘University Commentary’, *Universities Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.4, Aug 1956, p.319.

⁵ Murray had been appointed bursar of Lincoln in 1937; he retired as Rector to take up his work at the UGC. He was created a life peer in 1964. Geoffrey Caston, ‘Murray, Keith Anderson Hope, Baron Murray of Newhaven (1903-1993)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP 2005, accessed 27 June 2019).

⁶ David Smith, ‘Eric James and the “Utopianist” Campus: Biography, Policy and the Building of a New University during the 1960s’, *History of Education*, 2007, 1-20, i, 4.

⁷ See papers on UGC files at the National Register of Archives (NRA), in particular UGC7 series.

⁸ See note of meeting between Murray and Stone, 27 Mar 1956, NRA UGC7/215. Also, Report on visit to York, Murray, 25 June 1960, NRA UGC7/169.

⁹ Discussion between Sir William McCormick, first Chairman of the UGC (1919-1930) and Alan Kidd, junior Board of Education official, see Christine H Shinn, *Paying the Piper: The Development of the University Grants Committee 1919-1946* (Falmer, 1986) 33ff.

¹⁰ For an overall account, see ‘University Development 1957-1962’, UGC Report, presented to Parliament (1964) Cmnd. 2267.

¹¹ Memo, Murray on his visit to York, TNA UGC7/169.

¹² Memo, ‘The New University Institutions’, UGC to Clarke, 9 March 1960, TNA UGC7/170.

¹³ Report of (Robbins) Committee on Higher Education, 1963, Cmnd.2154.

¹⁴ M Shattock, *The University Grants Committee and the Management of British Universities* (Open U, 1994) 86.

¹⁵ Michael Sanderson, *The History of the University of East Anglia Norwich* (London, 2002) 27.

¹⁶ Frank Thistlethwaite, *Origins: A Personal Reminiscence of UEA’s Foundation* (privately printed, 2000) 1.

¹⁷ First Report of Academic Planning Board, University of Essex Foundations Papers, Box 1.

¹⁸ Minutes of UGC meeting, 17 Dec 1959, NRA UGC1/7.

¹⁹ Noel Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation* (London, 1990), 374.

²⁰ At UEA this ratio was 1:7.6 in the mid-60s. Sanderson, 271.

²¹ A recommendation of Robbins that was not implemented was the development of five ‘Special Institutions for Scientific and Technological Education and Research (SISTERS)’, comparable to MIT.

²² Jon Agar, ‘Science and the new universities’ in Pellew and Taylor, 125.

²³ Michael Young’s book was first published in 1958.

²⁴ Annan, 372.

²⁵ TNA/UGC annual returns from universities show that, for example, in FY 1963/4 local authorities contributed 18% and the Exchequer 71% to the University of York, while in FY 1973/4 local authorities contributed 1.0% and the Exchequer 78%.

²⁶ Sanderson, 269.

²⁷ Thus wrote Sanderson about UEA, 245. This was typical across the sector where the Exchequer block grant was the major source of income.

²⁸ Lord Annan, ‘British Higher Education’, *Minerva*, 1982, 19. Quoted by Sanderson, 273.

²⁹ Quoted by M Shattock, *Making Policy in British Higher Education 1945-2011* (Open U Press, 2012), 51.

Dreaming of Franz Baermann Steiner, dead on 26.xi.1952, aged 43

The answer seemed simple:
in the half-light your sister
played the ‘Appassionata’
to an audience of souls,
you sensitive to the broken
window overhead,
the shouldered bridge
in the Japanese garden
decorated by children
ever attentive to the living
and the dead,
to the japonica and jasmine
candles carried towards birth
watches synchronised for the snake-pit
of the miser,
whispers in the academy obligatory
at nightfall,
gloves off at breakfast, voices in thrall
to rituals of greeting votive and vatic,
farewells dumped in a box in the attic.
conversation a treatise on dreaming
the greatest moments,
a potent force on a slow evening
in late November, friends gathered
to debate conditions of surrender,
the all-hearing seer decently tender,
two-in-one at the confluence
of tomorrows
quiet now in yesterday’s sorrows.

BRUCE ROSS-SMITH

Bruce Ross-Smith is a Vancouver Island born Oxford based retired lecturer who for decades has lived with his wife and children on the slopes of Headington Hill. He posts poems regularly on the St Edmund Hall Writers’ Forum and his recollections of Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard will be published later this year in the collection *A Touch of Genius*.

What happened to civic responsibility?

ROBERT A. SCOTT

THE events at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 6 and the exhortations by some elected officials leading up to them got me to thinking about civic responsibility and our nation's future. It also reminded me of a conversation I had with someone I had met while in the Navy years ago. In an exchange about the Constitution, he asked, "Which Constitution do you believe in?"

At first, I didn't understand what he meant. Then I remembered the confirmation hearing of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett and her testimony on the meaning of "originalism." So, I concluded, this is what he asked: Did I believe in the Constitution of 1787, that followed the American Revolution, or was I one of those who believe in the Constitution that followed Reconstruction and gave previously denied rights to all people?

Those who cling to the original wording of 1787 maintain that the text is authoritative and unchangeable. They seem to ignore that the Constitution was written and adopted with provision for evolution in thinking and amendment. Without the amendments, Barrett wouldn't have the right to vote or serve as a judge.

I began thinking about this question, which Constitution, while pondering the events of the past few months and the rampage that took place in the halls of Congress. Why don't we know more about our history and our form of government? Why do some people react angrily when historians offer research demonstrating that some long-held truth turns out to be incorrect? Ours is called an exceptional country, but it isn't exceptional in the ways some espouse. They claim a moral superiority when the claim is really different.

What has become the United States is not a nation based on tribal affinity, a common land or region, or blood relations, as are some others. Instead, it is a nation unlike most because it was founded on ideas and ideals that became the founding principles of freedom, civic engagement and responsibility, and schooling for citizenship. These principles, and others, still obtain, even if they aren't fully realized. That's why we refer to the nation as an "experiment," and why we strive to "create a more perfect union." We recognize it is not yet perfect, but continue to strive for it to be—for all people.

Those old enough will remember junior high and high school courses in civics, including formal instruction in U.S. government, history and democracy. For the fortunate students, civics instruction wasn't just textbooks in

the classroom, but also involved activities such as writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper, attending and writing about school board meetings, and formulating proposed legislative bills and debating the merits of the ideas behind them. While all 50 states require some form of instruction in civics and government, theory-based classroom instruction isn't sufficiently supported by experience-based learning. One consequence is that only 25 percent of American students achieve the "proficient" standard on the National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics Assessment.

According to the National Education Association, until the 1960s it was common for high school students in the U.S. to take three different classes in civics and government. Unfortunately, these courses were slashed in the early 2000s, when the federal initiative called "No Child Left Behind" gave priority to "core subjects" like math and English, and to job preparation and standardized testing. In addition, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, only small proportions of teachers surveyed thought that school districts and parents would support teaching about politics in a course on government or civics.

The toxic nature of politics reflects the decline in education in civic responsibility, and promotes partisanship over patriotism. How can we fulfill our obligations to pursue the common good if we give priority to conflict over compromise? How can we discover the virtues of resolution over revolution if we don't know the building blocks of our democracy?

In pursuit of a more perfect union, we should celebrate the four freedoms drawn from the Bill of Rights and articulated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. We should use them as templates when discussing national purpose, priorities and progress. These principles, together with schooling in civics and critical thinking, can help guide fulfillment of the promises contained in the Constitution to which our elected and appointed officials swear loyalty.

This article was previously published by LIHerald.com on January 28, 2021.

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author's name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

Lessons in communication

G.R.EVANS

IN response to a Supplementary Congregation Question in October the *Gazette* of 12 November published an undertaking that there would henceforth be regular rolling publication of the Minutes of the Silver and Bronze Groups which have been acting under the Crisis Management Framework for more than a year now. Minutes of these bodies brought into being to provide emergency governance may be found (behind SSO), up to the end of October at the time of writing.¹

Those covering the period from August through to the first month of Michaelmas Term when Covid-19 infections were rising again show the same evidence of careful, conscientious and comprehensive planning as the earlier Minutes did. Bronze makes a preliminary shot at identifying in detail problems arising or foreseeable, and making proposals about how best to deal with them. It reports to Silver which makes ‘decisions’.

Covid-19 has regularly been on the Agenda of the Council and Members of Council will presumably have had the opportunity to see these Minutes from the beginning. Certainly they must have been able to do so on request, since the Council remains responsible for the exercise of powers it has delegated and these Minutes are now to be found behind links on the Council’s website.² In passing, one is bound to wonder how forcibly Council members reading them have been struck by the contrast between these full and honest working notes and the style and fullness of the Council’s own published Minutes.

Naturally questions arise about the acceptability of the passing of the University’s governance into the hands of a small number of unidentified individuals for all these months, with no indication as yet of any plan for review of that delegation made by Council to permit it. The Silver Group Minutes from the end of last Trinity Term indicate that the time is coming when such a review should be considered. Already on 6 August it had been ‘felt there was a role for Silver to have some authorisation powers’. On 6 October after a section under the heading ‘Crisis Management Framework next steps’ comes the following:

‘It will be worth considering how to hold on to the co-ordinating function of M[ichaelmas] C[oordination] G[r]oup post-pandemic. This is a missing layer in University governance.’

Indeed it is, and any continuing ‘holding on’ in any form to what has been happening during Covid-19 must surely be put to Congregation. It is not merely a matter for Council.

Meanwhile ‘continuation’ has been happening (6 October). ‘The proposed Hilary and Trinity Terms planning group will be for medium-range planning, not an immediate decision-making body’. ‘Bronze will need broader representation; the exact details of how this will work, provision for deputies/representatives, etc are being worked through’. ‘The committees of Council should not be overburdened with non-urgent “business as usual” given the already intense workload of the term’, the Minutes say.

The internal publication of these Minutes is, of course, very welcome but they take some decoding. Bronze records say who attended a given meeting. For Silver, no list of those attending or apologies for absence is included so it is impossible to know who makes up the Silver Group for any meeting or in aggregate. The Minutes are full of acronyms for individuals, some easily identifiable as the Registrar and Pro-Vice-Chancellors, others less so, and for Task Forces and other teams and groups in charge of this and that aspect of ‘crisis’ consultation and decision-making it may not be at all clear who is taking and acting on ‘decisions’ and on what authority.

The Silver Group found itself in certain difficulties without such organisational clarity. On 13 August it minuted that:

‘The concern was expressed that silver was being inundated with detail and not spending as much time on the woods as opposed to the trees. There was concern that the system of having a member of Silver operate as a sponsor of papers was being honoured in the breach and as a result the papers were providing lots of detail but guiding principles were often not evident.’

It repeated a request:

‘for papers to come to Silver with the name of the sponsor and who had signed off from Bronze. The sponsor also needs to make sure their paper’s preamble is consistent with previously agreed positions before submitting to Silver.’

The Student Responsibility Agreement

When it was realised during the summer of 2020 by Silver that student discipline would have to be thought through once students returned, it was asked whether it might be necessary to suspend parts of Statute XI. The Proctors were ‘opposed to taking responsibility for student conduct outside of a clear university context’, for example, in private accommodation. ‘Council will be asked to consider the issue at its away day’.

The discussion of the Student Responsibility Agreement is a useful example of the recording of honest attempts by Silver to deal with a significant continuing difficulty. The SRA gave rise to much discussion when Silver agreed to endorse it on 13 August:

‘The wording on the expectation that students should sign the document needs to be tightened up as it currently risks seeming we don’t mind whether people sign or not; the expectation should be that everyone will.’

It was suggested that ‘Colleges should be asked to report to the Proctors’ Office on the signing rates’, even that ‘students who do not sign the Agreement may be asked to do so in a departmental context to access some (all?) departmental services’.

On 7 September *Cherwell* published an article with a link to the full text of the SRA. By 30 September it had cov-

erage of ‘concerns’ being raised, including by the governing body of Queen’s. There was mention of a ‘patronising tone’ and ‘a real risk [students] would be denied access to university teaching and spaces if we did not go along with it’.

During subsequent Silver discussion of ‘student signing’ of the SRA it was suggested that ‘it should be made completely clear that the document is all-or-nothing, students cannot sign with reservations, or omitting a particular paragraph’ but proposed that:

‘the objectors should not be dealt with by the Proctors’ Office; an implementation process is being worked on for getting returns from colleges to departments. Silver approved the recommended approach’ (October 6).

Two days later (8 October) it was Minuted that ‘some colleges still have large pockets of unwillingness to sign the SRA and efforts to persuade the objectors are underway’. ‘Rumours that students have already been refused accommodation for failure to sign are apparently unfounded thus far.’

By 13 October:

‘SRA signing is still ongoing but some of the heat has gone out of the debate. On the basis of returns so far, well over 90% have signed, and many of the rest will be due to late returns or disorganisation rather than actual objection.’

With the beginning of Term came several incidents which prompted the ‘Silver Team’ to minute on 20 October that named persons and:

‘hopefully the SU are writing to the student body, via various channels, urging them to consider their behaviour after the incidents over the weekend. The regular call with the City authorities will require us to explain how we will avoid such incidents in future.’

Now ‘Conference and Proctors Office have discussed a new note on SRA signing’. ‘Failure to sign will be considered an aggravating factor in cases where COVID restrictions are breached by students.’

The relationship of the SRA to the student contract was now addressed:

‘Terms and Conditions for students may need to be amended accordingly to avoid legal risks when recruiting for next year, and this will come to the next Silver.’

This was still under discussion on 27 October.

The role of the Public Affairs Directorate

By contrast with this exemplary frankness in the recording of the progress of consideration of a controversial topic, the Minutes are conscious of the need to manage ‘communications’. Indeed concerns about ‘comms’ were expressed:

‘Silver to gain advice from PAD around interim staff comms around MT planning and the possible use of Blueprint to respond to UCU’s claims (although this was deemed not widely read by academics)’ (6 August)

The role of PAD (Public Affairs Directorate) now, of course, includes internal communications as well as repu-

tation management and dealing with the media. It seems to see the principles governing external communication as equally applicable internally. Its stamp has been noticeable in the ‘senior’ Blogs which have circulated under Crisis Management governance.

‘Silver felt that papers concerning the Hardship Fund and Space charging would both have benefitted from an introductory preamble ... stressing the sense that we are all one community and are all contributing to the response to the pandemic.’ (6 August).

‘There was a large Comms paper coming to Silver which may be this week or next. GA to update’ (6 August).

The Minutes for September 3 note plans for a ‘Communications paper’. Might ‘the emphasis on “feeling”’, ‘given the volatile situation and the range of potential reactions, ask too much of our communications?’ PAD would ‘work closely with the college comms community on messaging to incoming students’ including ‘everyone’s responsibility to ensure the term goes well’. Later, a paper was to be ‘edited for publication to make clear to the community the depth of medical expertise behind our decisions’. JC was to ‘arrange for it to be published in the Bulletin’ (17 September).

By 24 September ‘clear comms’ would ‘be needed about how we are responding to this change, we cannot be seen to do nothing’. ‘Silver agreed that a high-level communication (encompassing the cascade, Blueprint and the uni covid status page) should go out’ on options and protections for staff deciding ‘their on-site working plans’.

On 29 October the Open Forum planned for 4 November was seen as ‘an opportunity to address some staff and student concerns:

‘We will need some reassuring comms before then perhaps included in today’s or Friday’s cascade.’

On 20 October an additional PAD funding bid was discussed. ‘This is intended as a short-term bid to increase capacity to meet the demands of communicating our COVID response.’

* * *

There are surely important lessons to be learned from this contrast between full and frank minuting of the process of deliberation and decision-making in the committees and what is a professional public relations exercise at the level of ‘comms’. Where the two meet the flavours do not blend well. In the *Bulletin* of 1 February was published one of the ‘Letters to Senior Team’ previously invited in the *Bulletin*, perhaps the only one. The author, an academic-related member of staff, says she is thankful ‘for this opportunity’ and ‘very happy in the team I work in and I have two very supportive Line Managers’. She made a point about working from home and missing the pleasures of casual live contact. In reply the Registrar wrote, ‘The VC, I and our colleagues really appreciate the opportunity to hear what people working in the university care about’. The content of the exchange is positive and helpful, but awkward and stilted when compared with the frankness of those Minutes on the subject of what ‘people’ in the University have been exercised about and the varied ways it is commonly discussed.

¹ <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/article/oxfords-crisis-management-framework-explained>

² <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/council/meetings>

Wellington Square – Oxford’s Berlaymont

PETER OPPENHEIMER

EVENTS of recent weeks have highlighted startling likenesses between the executive of the European Union in Brussels and the central University administration of Oxford. In both cases we see an establishment of servants, civil or other, which has outgrown the reasons for its existence and whose upper ranks now claim to be in charge of anything they can lay their hands on. *Folie de grandeur* and paucity of imperial garments are conspicuous. But the bureaucratic machine grinds on regardless, distorting and ultimately undermining the objectives of the whole institution.

Begin with the continent. The visit to Moscow of Josep Borrell, currently foreign minister or “High Representative” of the European Union, had the air of history repeating itself—only this time the farce preceded the tragedy. The Representative’s supposed objective was to urge his Russian counterpart to respect human rights and democratic freedoms, with particular reference to Alexei Navalny. Press reports did not make clear whether Mr. Borrell actually managed to mention Navalny; but in any case, the main response to his visit was the expulsion from Russia of three European diplomats for supposedly joining pro-Navalny demonstrations.

Switch to Oxford. Take the Vice-Chancellor’s announcement some weeks earlier that Oxford was requiring the Covid-19 vaccine developed in its laboratories to be supplied by AstraZeneca to many recipients “at cost”. The statement clearly assumed (to judge by its misguided analogy with penicillin) that the Oxford vaccine would be the only one of its kind on the market. It showed no awareness of what the phrase “at cost” means in a business context. And it could not possibly have been informed on the multiple elements—national and international, political, geographical, ethical and philanthropic—liable to far outweigh production cost as factors determining vaccine availability both between and within countries.

At the same time, the statement avoided any suggestion that Oxford might be reasonably entitled, on both educational and ethical grounds, to some material reward for its contribution—a reward which could be measurable in relation to the University’s finances while remaining minuscule as a proportion of global turnover on the vaccine. This omission, moreover, was hardly consistent either with Oxford’s regular boasting about commercial spinoffs of much more limited scope, or with its routine reliance on large-scale funding from the pharmaceutical industry. And barely consistent with its having dispatched an Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor to Germany to underline the University’s interest in continuing to receive research grants from the EU after Brexit.

Before leaving vaccines, we may note that the head of the UK’s remarkably effective Vaccine Task Force is an Oxford alumna in biochemistry, Kate Bingham; and that Wellington Square’s Propaganda and Admiralty Department (aka Public Affairs Directorate) has been uncharacteristically modest on the subject. That could of course be just chance—but probably isn’t, it being difficult

to extol the VTF without simultaneously reminding everybody of the EU’s multiple shortcomings by comparison.

And the PAD’s fraternal attitude to the EU rule-makers is all too obvious—*liegt auf der Hand*, as the Germans say. Witness, for example, its gratuitous publication in the *University Bulletin* of findings from a survey of European opinion about the EU’s role. The excuse for publication is presumably that the survey was organised in part by St. Antony’s College and Timothy Garton Ash. But the material does the organisers no credit. Respondents were asked, for example, to pick “the top three most important things the EU had done for them personally, from a set of options.... ‘Freedom to travel’ was in the top three for 61 percent. ‘Opportunities to live, work and study in Europe...’ for 53 percent. ‘Peace and external security’... for 38 percent.” The toe-curling absurdity both of the question and of the answers needs no comment, except perhaps to deplore the ignorance which is thereby promoted of contemporary European history.

Happily, the promotion has so far had limited success. Almost three-quarters of respondents agreed that “If it did not offer the freedom to travel, work, study and live in other EU member states, the EU would not be worth having.” Poor Garton Ash was driven hastily to suggest that this freedom “is precisely what most British citizens have just lost, following the UK’s departure from the EU.” No need, of course, to mention current restrictions on intra-European travel due to COVID-19. On the other hand, how climate policies may affect travel regimes in the longer run is matter for speculation. So is the relationship between freedom of movement within the EU and EU policies on immigration from third countries. Meanwhile, “most British citizens” are unlikely to see any drastic curtailment of their liberties in the small adjustments they will henceforth be making. Most will be content to equip themselves with old-fashioned Green Cards when planning to drive on the continent, to purchase medical insurance as part of the cost of a foreign holiday, and to take their place alongside Middle Eastern, Chinese or Russian applicants in markets for Mediterranean residences or indeed for academic and other jobs in Europe.

Tedious impositions of this kind call to mind some of the time-consuming and divisive interventions of Wellington Square into the life of academic departments, not to mention colleges. A neat recent instance is the resumption in more specifically prescribed form of so-called “Recognition” payments—previously suspended, together with academic merit awards, at the time of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Each payment is for £200 gross of tax, to be justified by an “exceptional” or “exemplary” contribution at work, and to be accompanied by a letter of thanks. Heads of Department are required—sorry, “asked”—to budget for 15 percent of staff (previously 8 percent) to receive such payments, recipients to be proposed by their line-managers and to be eligible for a payment not more often than six-monthly. The payments are meant to go principally to support staff, with special consideration for

non-white personnel and for those on furlough or otherwise held back from contributing.

The revised scheme was initiated late in Michaelmas Term 2020. By the end of January payments had been made to some 900 persons. For the University to be served

by exceptional and exemplary staff in such profusion is noteworthy—similar perhaps to the 40 percent or so of Oxford undergraduates who are nowadays casually awarded First-Class degrees.

The Passing of an Era

—Reflections on Philosophy in Oxford in the 20th Century

ANITA AVRAMIDES

It is often thought that an attachment to history leads to a conservative outlook, but what can be overlooked is the way a knowledge of history can help us to move on and be more radical in our thought. The latter momentum can be the result of learning about the way in which institutions and ways of organizing things within them came into existence; to learn of the forces that argued against what may have come to be a cherished institution or way of organizing things—in short, to learn how what is now a well-established way of proceeding was once considered radical and innovative. I want to look at a little (recent) history that has to do with philosophy at Oxford. I do this neither in order to urge a return, nor to propel us to a radical change. Rather I want to provide a moment of reflection upon an era of Oxford philosophy. The era I want to reflect upon is the 20th century. There is no doubt that this was an all-important time for Oxford philosophy. And, if one notes the obituaries of philosophers since the turn of the 21st century, one cannot help but note that a rather remarkable generation of Oxford philosophers has passed away. What will replace them is a matter for a rather different sort of reflection.

I want to begin, not by reflecting on people, but on their actions. In particular, I want to consider how the actions of a handful of dons affected the study of philosophy over the course of the 20th century. At the end of the 19th century, one studied Philosophy as part of *Literae Humaniores* (Lit Hum), a well-established and flourishing degree in Oxford both then and (to a somewhat lesser extent) now. This course takes as its model the study of the ancient, classical, worlds of Greece and Rome. What was deemed important to a contribution to what was then the modern world, was the study of the ancient world—its history, languages, and philosophy. But at the beginning of the 20th century things were beginning to change. In Oxford there was much talk of the study of political science, with its interest in the social and economic problems that were seen to be important to the development of a newly emerging world.¹

According to Norman Chester, 1902 marks a time of considerable discussion in Oxford (and Cambridge) of the need “to make provision for Political Economy, or Economics and associated subjects”.² In his book Chester takes us through the birth-pains of PPE, a degree we today take for granted as one of Oxford’s pre-eminent degrees. But in 1902, PPE was but a glint in the eyes of some economists, and a few philosophers. It is interesting to record

what propelled these men (for they were all men, at this time). According to a few economists at the time (Alfred Marshall in Cambridge and Francis Edgeworth and L.L. Price in Oxford) what was needed in the curriculum at these two Universities was the study of economics. For the philosophers, it seems that what propelled them was a desire to move away from the emphasis on the study of the ancient world and a thought that what a student of philosophy needed was a grounding in the study of *modern* philosophical thought, that is the study of the history of philosophy from Descartes onwards. Things were, thus, different for these two subjects: economics was struggling to enter the curriculum; philosophy was looking for a way to evolve after a long, and strong, association with the ancient world.³

Just over one hundred years ago, in June 1920, the then Hebdomadal Council agreed a Statute for the establishment of an Honour School devoted to the promotion of the “study of the structure, and philosophical, political and economic principles, of Modern Society”;⁴ this Statute came before Congregation and was passed on the 20th October 1920.⁵

There were now two routes into philosophy. For many years, however, those who led in the profession continued to study Lit Hum. I have in mind such figures as Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin, H. H. Price, H.P. Grice, R.M. Hare, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Bernard Williams. Even the Antipodean J.L. Mackie, when he came to Oxford to study philosophy, studied Lit Hum. It wasn’t until after the mid-20th century—almost 50 years after its establishment—that philosophy could boast a holder of an Established Chair in Philosophy who had studied PPE and not Lit Hum.: the first was Peter Strawson, Waynflete Professor of Metaphysics, 1968-1987, and the second was Michael Dummett, Wykeham Professor of Logic, 1979-1992. That Dummett’s route into philosophy was through PPE and not Lit Hum may be thought to be in keeping with a feature of his philosophy—that it was somewhat at odds with the dominant school of philosophy at the time that he was entering the profession.⁶ That dominant school has come to be known, in some circles, simply as “Oxford Philosophy”.

I turn briefly to consider this school of philosophy which, according to Geoffrey Warnock, dominated philosophy not just in Oxford, but around the world and spanned the period from 1945 until the mid-1960’s. This was a time when, in the minds of some, Oxford was con-

sidered to be ‘the centre of the philosophical universe’. This was a time when what has come to be known as analytic philosophy may be thought to have come of age, and a time before philosophy in the United States became a dominant force. ‘Oxford philosophy’ is sometimes also known as ‘ordinary language philosophy’, and it has strong associations with the work of Oxford philosophers such as Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin and Peter Strawson. It also has close connections to the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, although he worked largely in Cambridge.⁷

At the heart of philosophy lies the question how we are to understand the business of philosophy: what is its method and how should it proceed? These questions received a very particular definition around the early-to-mid twentieth century: the business of philosophy should be the study of language. This study is something that has come to be seen as central to what is now called ‘analytic philosophy’.⁸ Michael Dummett has suggested that Gottlob Frege, because of his insistence on the importance of the study of language to philosophy, should be considered to be “the grandfather of analytic philosophy”.⁹ But, while analytic philosophers at this time may have been united in accepting their work to be the study of language, there were deep divisions concerning which language they should concentrate on. There were those, like Frege, who believed that the study should be of ideal or formal languages, ones that prescind from the vagaries and imprecisions of language as it used in everyday transactions. On the other hand, there were those who believed that imprecision and ambiguity are of the essence of the expressive power of language and who insisted that language cannot be studied in abstraction from its daily use. These latter philosophers emphasized a more humanistic attitude, central to which was a deep respect for ordinary language. It is the work of these philosophers that came to be known as ordinary language philosophy; some of the most revered defenders of this way of doing philosophy were to be found in Oxford.

John Austin once wrote that language is a long-evolved, complex, and subtle instrument and that philosophers should afford it careful scrutiny. He points out that language has evolved over many generations and that the distinctions made within it and the connections marked by it “have stood up to the long test of time of the survival of the fittest” and are “more subtle [...] than any you or I are likely to think up in our armchairs of an afternoon” (Austin, *A Plea for Excuses*, p.182). Austin acknowledges that ordinary language has no claim to be the last word in philosophy, but he insists that it would be prudent to at least allow it the *first* word (*Ibid*, p.185). It is hard not to see the influence of a Classical education in Austin’s work. And this influence is evident not just in that work, but in so much of what was being written in Oxford—and beyond—during that period. For so many years philosophers were content to give language that first word.

Towards the end of the 20th century the influence of both language and a Greats education had begun to wane in philosophy.¹⁰ In its place one began to see a greater affinity with science. However, this affinity was rather slow to develop. If one returns to the early years of the 20th century one finds the beginning of a concern with the place of science in the curriculum. While the economists were pushing for the study of political economy, the philosophers were also busy trying to establish links between philosophy and the natural sciences.¹¹ Discussions

to this effect began in 1912, and a scheme to establish a School that brought philosophy together with a science subject was submitted to Hebdomadal Council in December 1914. While this scheme mentioned the desirability of aligning a more modern approach to philosophy with such subjects as mathematics, natural science or psychology, it is interesting to note that there was no mention of either economics or politics.¹² The First World War brought all discussion of change to the curriculum to a halt, but as early as May 1919 discussion resumed. The idea that was put forward at that time was for an Honour School that covered Science, Economics, Politics and Philosophy—an Honour School that was to be called “Science Greats”. But in February 1920 a small sub-committee of Council (which records tells us had H.A. Pritchard and A.D. Lindsay as members) met to consider the proposal for a Science Greats, which sub-committee recommended that an Honours School consisting of modern philosophy and science should be postponed and that what should be taken forward was a School that combined philosophy “with modern political, economic and social development”—in short, PPE. In relation to a School of Philosophy and Natural Science, an account of the debate on General Board of the University was published in the *Oxford Magazine* for 15th February 1923, and it reports that it was “clear that the majority felt that the time was not yet ripe for such a scheme”.¹³

It took until 1947 before a joint school involving philosophy and a science subject—Philosophy, Psychology and Physiology (PPP)—was established.¹⁴ It should be noted that a) until that time, Experimental Psychology was not a subject that could be studied on its own at the undergraduate level in Oxford,¹⁵ and b) that many at that time would have considered psychology a social science.¹⁶ It was to be another twenty years or so before the establishment of any more joint schools between philosophy and the natural sciences.

In his unpublished notes for a lecture given to the 2019 British Logic Colloquium Annual Meeting, Daniel Issacson reports that in the early 1960’s W.F.R. Hardie published a ‘review’ of the *Oxford University Examination Decrees and Regulations* (The Grey Book) in *The Oxford Magazine*, in which he complained that Oxford undergraduates were, unlike those in Cambridge (with its Tripos system), rarely able to combine the study of Arts and Science subjects. In response, in 1964, the General Board set up a committee chaired by William Kneale to look into the matter. The Kneale Report recommended that “new joint schools linking the natural sciences and humanities should be instituted”. A committee was subsequently set up to explore the possibility of a joint Honour School of Mathematics and Philosophy, the philosophical membership of which included A.J. Ayer, Michael Dummett, and Brian McGuinness.¹⁷ At the same time a corresponding committee was set up to consider yet another joint school of philosophy with physics, the philosophical membership of which included Rom Harré, John Lucas, and again Brian McGuinness.¹⁸ Statutes governing the two new Joint Schools of Mathematics & Philosophy and Physics & Philosophy were accepted at a meeting of Congregation on 21st May 1968.

While the ordinary language approach ruled the roost (one might say) in Oxford in the mid-to-late 20th century, there were also those who followed a different path. Even before the setting up of the Joint School of Philosophy

and Physics, there was a course on offer to students devoted to the study of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence on space and time, a paper which came to be foundational to the first year of the Physics and Philosophy degree. This course was taught jointly by John Lucas and Rom Harré. Rom Harré was a philosopher of science and a New Zealander, who came to Oxford and did the BPhil under the direction of J.L. Austin (even here there is a thread connecting to the old Lit Hum). John Lucas was an Oxford man who studied Greats and was a pupil of R.M. Hare, another Greats man.

Even in Oxford, John Lucas stood out for his eccentricity. Lucas also stood out somewhat from the philosophical mainstream with his interests. While it is true that he was a student of Greats, Lucas had (like his contemporary Michael Dummett) a strong interest in mathematics and logic—both of which he studied at Princeton in the late 1950's. Perhaps this sojourn in the U.S. is what led to his marching to a different drum when back in Oxford. Harvey Brown (the first holder in 1984 of a newly established University Lectureship in the Philosophy of Physics) reports in his contribution to the 7th edition of the *Oxford Philosophy Magazine* that Lucas once said to him that he, Lucas, was grateful to Oxford for allowing him to research on topics “off the beaten philosophical track”. There is little doubt that the track that Lucas referred to was one devoted to the study of ordinary language; the off-piste track followed by Lucas included the philosophy of science and the philosophy of mathematics. As was the case with so many of the Oxford philosophy dons at this time, Lucas' interests and knowledge in philosophy ranged widely. As well as being involved in the setting up of the Joint School of Physics and Philosophy, Lucas was involved in the establishment of yet another joint school with philosophy.

Towards the close of the 20th century two further Joint Schools were established. The first of these Joint Schools was Philosophy and Theology, which was introduced in the early 1970's ('73 or '74 according to the Oxford philosopher David Leal). The idea for this Joint School was conceived and navigated through the Philosophy Sub-Faculty by Basil Mitchell, holder of the Nolloth Chair of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion from 1968-1984. According to Leal, Mitchell was ably supported by his friend John Lucas in his efforts to get this new Joint School passed by the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy. Modern Languages and Philosophy was the last of the Joint Schools to be established in the 20th century.¹⁹ Leal believes that this Joint School was also established in the early 1970's.²⁰

As my colleague at St Hilda's, Kathy Wilkes (also a student of Greats), once said, “Philosophy is like chips, it is served with everything”.²¹ Of course, philosophy is not served—or studied—with *all* subjects, but the range of subjects with which it is studied expanded over the course of the 20th century. Prior to 1920 philosophy was studied only as part of *Literae Humaniores*; by the end of the 20th century it could be studied with a wide range of other subjects. The study of philosophy was changing, and so was its practice. As the 20th century drew to a close, the study of ordinary language was no longer of central concern to philosophers working and studying in Oxford. Not many today would mark analytic philosophy as the study of language—especially not if that study is taken as a route to the study of thought. Nor is it clear that one can find one guiding thread as dominant in philosophy

today. And philosophy in Oxford, while still flourishing, stands shoulder to shoulder with a range of departments and faculties throughout Britain and the rest of the world where philosophy of all kinds flourish. At the start of the 21st century one finds philosophers interested in a wide range of issues, only a small proportion of which is related to language.

As an interest in language has waned, the place of science in relation to philosophy has grown. Philosophers can be found in important dialogue with neuroscientists, computer scientists, and biologists, in addition to psychologists and physicists. In many ways, the very practice and writing of philosophy has followed some of the ways of the sciences (with its high concentration of specialization, a style of journal writing not unfamiliar from the sciences, and even some jointly authored publications). One may wonder how some of the great figures of philosophy—most of whom came to philosophy through the study of *Literae Humaniores*—would respond to the philosophy of today. We do have a few hints. In his paper “Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline”, Bernard Williams suggests that philosophy has a closer affinity to history (“the central case of a humanistic discipline”) than to the sciences, and he voices suspicions about attempts to “assimilate philosophy to the aims, or at least the manners, of the sciences”.²² Philosophy, according to Williams, is “part of a more general attempt to make the best sense of our life, and so of our intellectual activities, in the situation in which we find ourselves”.²³ And in a contribution to the *Oxford Magazine* in 1992, John Lucas laments, among other things, the tendency towards overspecialization in philosophy, writing: “we do not flourish if we are left to confine ourselves to our own specialities”.

It is a shame that we can no longer enter into conversation with these philosophers. With the exception of Dan Isaacson, Harvey Brown and David Leal whose work contributed to the writing of this article, every philosopher mentioned has died—many in the last few years. The *Oxford Philosophy Magazine* for 2019-20* announced the passing of John Lucas, Brian McGuinness and Rom Harré, as well as of David Bostock, Myles Burnyeat and Jim Griffin. Bernard Williams, Peter Strawson, and Michael Dummett died in 2003, 2006 and 2011, respectively. Many will see these deaths, added to so many others, as the passing of an era. Indeed, it was that very thought that prompted the writing of this article.

¹ There was also the consideration that many of the new Universities being established at the time were offering courses in Political Economy and a worry that Oxford and Cambridge would fall behind (*vide*, N. Chester, *Economics, Politics and Social Studies in Oxford: 1900-85*, p. 3-4).

² *Ibid.*

³ Up until that time there were a few courses in political economy, but they were offered in the History Faculty. And while the study of the philosophy of the ancient world might have dominated, it should be noted that the study of such figures as Kant, Mill, Bentham and Hegel also figured on the curriculum at that time (*vide* Chester, p. 1).

⁴ Chester reports that on route to the establishment of PPE, there had been a Diploma first examined in 1905 for the study of Economics, but this faded away not long after the establishment of PPE which attracted students in great numbers almost from its inception.

⁵ There was to be a celebration of 100 Years of PPE to take place at Balliol College in September 2020, but this had to be postponed due to the current pandemic.

⁶ In contrast to Dummett's work, Strawson's was much closer to the heart of what I am calling "the dominant school" of philosophy in Oxford at this time. What may explain the divergence here are different underlying interests: while Dummett's interests were in logic and mathematics, Strawson's were in English literature. Indeed, Strawson was accepted to study English at Oxford, and requested to change course to PPE upon arrival.

⁷ While Wittgenstein held a post in Cambridge, his work (especially the later work) was arguably more influential at that time in Oxford than in his own university.

⁸ Analytic philosophy is way of doing philosophy associated largely with Britain and the United States (especially during this period), and it is often contrasted with Phenomenology and Existential philosophy which was (and to some extent still is) largely practised on the Continent (hence also, 'Continental Philosophy').

⁹ Dummett has suggested that analytic philosophy began with the work of the German philosophers such as Husserl, Bolzano, Brentano, Meinong and Frege at the end of the 19th century, although it did not come of age until the early 20th century with the work of English philosophers such as G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell (see M. Dummett, *The Seas of Language*, ix & p. 171).

¹⁰ This waning of philosophy's connection with Greats is mourned by John Lucas in his article "Lament for Philosophy", published in the *Oxford Magazine*, No. 83, 4th week, Trinity Term, 1992.

¹¹ It is interesting in this connection to note that some economists (in particular Marshall at Cambridge) insisted on setting up the study of economics with "as high standards of scientific accuracy as the physical or biological sciences" (this comes from a description of Marshall's attitude towards economics by Maynard Keynes, referred to in Chester, p. 6.). Here we see an emphasis on the science in social science.

¹² Chester tells us that history and anthropology were also mentioned in this detailed scheme that was submitted to Hebdomadal Council in 1914.

¹³ In this connection, one may recall that it wasn't until 1959 that C.P. Snow gave the Rede Lectures in Cambridge, which lectures drew attention to the existence, in Britain, of what Snow called "two cultures": the arts and the sciences. The rejection of a Science Greats took place 39 years before these highly influential lectures. It is interesting to note the increase in the number Science students in relation to Arts students over the course of the 20th Century. According to the Franks Report on Oxford University, published in May 1966, in 1928-9 there were 714 Science Undergraduates compared to 3,402 Arts Undergraduates; by the early 1980's there were 3,250-3,750 Science Undergraduates compared to 5,000-5,500 Arts Undergraduates.

¹⁴ PPP flourished at Oxford until it was replaced, in 2010, by PPL – Philosophy, Psychology and Linguistics.

¹⁵ The Wilde Readership in Mental Philosophy, which is taken to mark the beginning of the official study of psychology in Oxford, was established in 1898. Experimental Psychology was only introduced as part of an undergraduate degree in 1947.

¹⁶ In 2002, and upon the setting up of a Divisional structure in Oxford, Psychology became part of the Medical Sciences Division.

¹⁷ A.J. Ayer, perhaps the British philosopher best known outside of philosophical circles, was also a student of Lit Hum. Ayer was Wykeham Professor of Logic from 1959 until 1978 (and was succeeded in the post by Michael Dummett). Brian McGuinness was a Fellow of The Queen's College; he is well-known for his publications on Wittgenstein and on the Vienna Circle.

¹⁸ McGuinness served *ex officio* on both committees, as Secretary of the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy at the time.

¹⁹ If we jump to the 21st century, we find a Joint School of Computer Science and Philosophy being established in 2012.

²⁰ Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to find any information that relates to the setting up of the Joint School of Modern Languages and Philosophy.

²¹ Dan Isaacson reports John Lucas as once writing that "Philosophy is the most promiscuous subject in the University". Wilkes and Lucas were great friends, and it is possible they came up with this way of thinking of philosophy together.

²² This paper can be found in a collection of papers by B. Williams selected and edited by A.W. Moore, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, Princeton and OUP (2009), pp. 180-182. More recently Tim Williamson, the current holder of the Wykeham Chair of Logic, has given voice to quite a different view of philosophy. See Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 182.

* Short obituaries can be found in this issue.

The Clock

... the clock, always the clock ...
in the black night when no-one is looking
ratchets are clicking, pawls are locking
never turn back, always the clock

always the clock, the clock, the clock
adding the seconds to more in the stack
rack upon rack upon rack upon rack
never look back, ever the clock

tick, tick, always the clock
chipping the rock and the chips from the rock
grit from the granite each strike of the pick
never put back, never put back

always the clock, always the clock
implacable tramp of the boots in the dark
fluttering beat of the blackening heart
shock of the knock and the crack of the lock

... and the clock, always the clock

KEITH EVETTS

Keith Evetts: alumnus of Jesus College, Cambridge with boyhood links to Oxford, retired after living in eight countries, gardens and writes poetry in Surrey.

A Conference on Architectural Metaphors

ADAM HANNA

THE cover image of Jane Griffiths's and my edited collection of essays about architectural space and the imagination is the gateway to its preoccupations.*

It depicts a small model of a now-familiar figure: a solitary home-worker, seated dutifully behind his desk. We see this figurine in what looks like rapt concentration, a two-thirds-written page before him. He is sequestered in a provisional-looking attic workroom. The floor of the bare, windowless space in which he sits consists of exposed joists; a wooden structural post supports the beam that runs over his head; the darkness that surrounds his desk suggests the simple illumination of a single bare bulb. This attic is a place of thought and writing stripped back to its ascetic Heideggerian essentials. It suggests Gaston Bachelard's idea of the attic as a symbolic counter to the subterranean terrors of the cellar, a geometrically ordered space that partakes of 'the rationality of the roof'.

A second glance, however, complicates the picture somewhat. The horizontal wooden beam that runs over the writer's head does not hold up the apex of the sloped roof of a house, as a viewer might expect it to. Rather, it spans the width of a rounded white dome. Is the figurine who we see writing with such concentration in fact at work inside a human skull? If so, is the skull inside which he is working his own? When we apprehend that the workspace in which the figurine writes is a literal headspace, it has the strange effect of dematerializing him. The picture goes from being a naturalistic representation of a human activity to a symbolic one that gives a mystery a perceivable form. The viewer becomes aware that they are not just looking at a writer who is working in an out-of-the-way place in his home, but at an attempt to represent something entirely intangible, whether it is called thought, consciousness, the soul, or the imagination. Whatever it is named, there is something that cannot be known by our unmediated senses, and our heads are its working-and-dwelling-places. The body not only needs to be housed, it is itself a house that is inhabited, or haunted, by an invisible tenant.

Dr Jane Griffiths and I put out a call for papers for a conference to be held at Wadham College to discuss ideas like the ones hinted at by this picture. We were not only interested in how architectural spaces were represented in literature, we wrote in our call for papers, we wanted to discuss the inextricability of architectural metaphors from the very processes of imagining and creating. Dozens of scholars from across the world answered this call, and gathered in Oxford over two days to discuss these ideas. The essays in the collection we eventually entitled *Architectural Space and the Imagination: Houses in Literature and Art from Classical to Contemporary* are preoccupied with ideas of the tangible and the intangible, and the animate and the inanimate, that are evoked by its cover image.

The artist Andrew Lanyon (in one of whose books this image was first printed) pursues this theme in the opening essay in the collection. This is a fanciful but serious piece that takes the form of a tour through a grand imaginary house, one that is made of nothing more substantial than thought itself. Thought, figured in this essay as the wind, is converted by a process of instantaneous alchemy into the walls and furniture of the structure that the piece describes:

'Wind moves in a new direction. Within moments the dovecote has become a small cottage, to which rooms, stairs and wings are rapidly added. While wind is pouring down the chimney, this building is already changing from a substantial house into a mansion and by the time wind bursts into an attic bedroom, the place is teetering on the brink of being opened to the public.'

The essays that came to be housed in the book, like Lanyon's, observe the themes of thought, imagination and creation in a variety of literary spaces. There is an essay that centres on the house that Elizabeth Bishop imagined at the end of a wind-scoured beach; there is one on the dingy rented accommodations of Dickens's clerks; there is one on the dead people that some medieval French poets imagined as being housed in their graves. In total, we collected fourteen essays on a range of very different texts from the classical to the contemporary.

The connections between the intangible forces of the imagination and solid architecture that our contributors discuss in their essays are far from new. In his *Theaetetus*, Plato likens the ordered mind to a containing-space in which experiences, which he represented as evanescent birds, can be made at home and so made domestic. Similarly, the late-Roman senator Cassiodorus thought that the intangible workings of the mind might be understood using spatial metaphors. In his mid-sixth-century tract the *Institutiones* he, following Plato, wrote of both thought and the imagination as being made possible by ordering experiences in the head as a farmer might sort animals into their different structures. In the words of Mary J. Carruthers, without this 'inventoried set of coops or animal-pens', there could be 'no intention, no inventory, no experience, and therefore no knowledge'. 'Without these sorting-spaces in the mind', summarises Carruthers, there could only be 'what is sometimes called *silva*, a pathless forest of chaotic material'.

Houses not only shelter the material body, they are carried invisibly in the imagination. The final piece in the book is a reflection on the place of houses in her own work by the poet Stephanie Norgate. In one of her poems, 'Fallen House to Final Owner', which was inspired by the chunks of masonry that remain at the base of a collapsed cliff near Dover, the remaining pieces of the sunken house dream of their own untumbling. These pieces instruct the house's last owner to rewind their fall and 'undrown the

songs' by gathering them up and miraculously making the house whole again at the top of the cliff on which it had once perched: 'Shake off the beach! And gather me up: hearths, lintels, stairs'. This prayer for resurrection assumes that the house itself, even after its destruction, is capable of thought. It suggests a confusion of where we can draw the line between the animate and the inanimate, the quick and the dead, the house and the mind.

Like the image of the thought-man at his desk on the book's cover, it suggests that solid, rooted architectural spaces and the free-ranging processes of thought are actually inextricable from one another.

* *Architectural Space and the Imagination: Houses in Literature and Art from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Jane Griffiths and Adam Hanna. New York: Palgrave, 2020. Pp. xvi+234.

Is satire past its sell-by date?

BERNARD RICHARDS

SATIRE has a venerable history, going back to classical periods. It is the means whereby writers and performers anatomize the times and hold fools and malefactors to account. It is sometimes dangerous for its practitioners. Juvenal was probably exiled. Jonson and Chapman made some jest about James I's '£30 knights' in *Eastward Ho!* (1605) and were clapped in prison. Our times are a bit more liberal, but now satirists face another problem: that reality, especially in the United States, has become so fantastic and incredible that they are in danger of being sidelined and terminally redundant.

Satire is usually regarded as destructive, but I should like to suggest that it is creative. The Prince Regent in the early nineteenth century was grotesque, but even more grotesque in Gillray's and Cruikshank's representations of him. In one, as the Prince of Wales, he is very like a whale. Louis Philippe was grotesque, but by the time Charles Philipon and Honoré Daumier had finished with him he looked more like a pear than a human being.



Honoré Daumier. *Les Poires* (1831), after Charles Philipon.

These caricatures landed them in prison, and in nineteenth-century France many satirical artists ended up there too, until a rather late act: on 29 July 1881, the Third French Republic passed the *Loi sur la liberté de la presse*.

The satirical impulse has continued. Margaret Thatcher was disapproved of by many in her time, but in her Spitting Image manifestations she became a sort of malevolent Valkyrie, rivalling and displacing the original. Tina Fey's uncannily accurate impersonations of Sarah

Palin (remember her?) substituted a *really* absurd figure for a mainly absurd figure, but the gaps between the two were so narrow that there was almost no room left for manoeuvre, and very little space for inventive satire. Palin's endorsement of Trump in Iowa in January 2016 was so surreal that words fail one. And since the actuality has not been 'wiped' it's possible to see it directly on the internet without creative mediation, at which point one feels that the satirist might as well pack up and go home, since he or she has been rendered almost redundant. Also uncanny is Tracey Ullman's Chancelorette Angela Merkel. What makes this so brilliant is that she is plunged into improbable settings—such as a tour through London on an open-top bus with her faithful aide Birgit (Samantha Spiro), singing '99 Red Balloons'. Forget the crisis; cheer yourself up by watching it on the internet.

Visual satire is immediate; in literature it takes a bit more time to make its impact. Pope's *Dunciad* fleshes out an alternative universe, alarmingly resembling our own, where 'universal Darkness buries all,' but its effect is not instantaneous. Byron's *Vision of Judgement* does the same. And if we are talking about alternative universes, peopled by an alternative cast, then Dante's *Inferno*, which is a kind of satire, is the magniloquent example. One is reminded that satire is close to fantasy and allegory. The modern admonitory dystopian examples include Zamyatin's *We* (circa 1921-21), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949).

Satire then stands to one side of reality and offers a fully fleshed-out alternative which rivals reality, replaces it even, but causes one critically to reflect on the reality. But if the reality itself is extraordinary then satire has a hard time coping. 'You couldn't make it up' is, in a way, the death-knell for the satirist. And how often have we heard that in our time.

The shenanigans in current American politics have caused us to reflect on the situation. They are beyond belief, and presided over by monster-in-chief Donald Trump. He is reincarnated as a Spitting Image puppet, but the puppet is but a pale simulacrum of the real thing. The craftspersons putting it together are put into the shade. It fails the solitary in the room test, because I haven't laughed once. Trump's defensive strategy resembles Charles I's in Westminster Hall, when he asked by what right he was being tried. There is a danger that one can become obsessive about Trump, as one becomes the equivalent of Mr. Dick with his King Charles's Head in Dickens's *David Copperfield*.

My thoughts turn to John Bird and John Fortune. How

we miss them; how we need them. John Fortune, alas, died in 2013. They skewered contemporary public absurdity with grace and subtlety, and one can imagine them making mince-meat of the current responses to the covid crisis. A look at their treatment of the sub-prime crisis provides all the evidence needed to demonstrate their mastery. America likewise needs them, or something like them. The Capitol riot has brought into prominence a crisis in the Republican Party that has been in the making for a number of years, and has been exacerbated by the Trump administration. Suddenly a large part of its base has achieved high visibility, as an expression of racism, white supremacy, anti-semitism, islamophobia and a nexus of other ills. It has become an increasingly hospitable home for Hillary Clinton's 'basket of deplorables'.

One person in particular brings into focus a whole range of malign attitudes: Marjorie Taylor Greene, who represents the 14th Congressional District of Georgia. On *Saturday Night Live* (30 January) Kate McKinnon interviewed Cecily Strong impersonating Marjorie Taylor Greene. The trouble was that reality defeated attempts at satire, and the skit was not much more than a transcript. She is so extreme that even the Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who opposed the impeachment of Trump, sharply criticized her fantastic conspiracy theories:

'Loony lies and conspiracy theories are cancer for the Republican Party and our country. Somebody who's suggested that perhaps no airplane hit the Pentagon on 9/11, that horrifying school shootings were pre-staged, and that the Clintons crashed JFK Jr.'s airplane is not living in reality.'

Glad to see that someone is seeing some sense, although he hasn't seen total sense. The House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy had a quiet word with her and then she was removed from two committees. Although he is not a beacon of light; he went down to Avignon, or wherever, to kiss the ring of the schismatic President. Faced with all this one thinks that the equivalents of Bird and Fortune just couldn't cope anymore. Their approach is a more dangerous and effective weapon than knock-about violence and anger, but it would dangerously close to being redundant at the moment. The light touch carries its risks though, since it is in danger of suggesting that if the targets are merely ridiculous and pathetic they do not constitute urgent danger. How is one to judge and satirise the behaviour of a President attempting to anticipate the coup in Myanmar? Is Juvenal's *saeva indignatio* the best stance to adopt? It's possible to feel anger, but one should rein it in, and on the whole it is the best stance to take when creating satire. The depiction of Pope's Sporus moves into anger, so

that it is likely to cause something more like alarm and revulsion in the reader than a recognition that there is something plausibly to be criticised in the victim, John Harvey.

Satire has its dangers and vulnerabilities. It can morph into mere entertainment, so that its function, to improve the state of affairs, can be lost sight of. And real entertainers, encountering satire, sometimes feel threatened. I recall Frankie Howerd being a guest on *That Was The Week That Was* almost 60 years ago (why do all my articles keep bringing up the 'sixties?') being somewhat snide about the amateur university wags and wits ('university half-wits' J.B. Leishman of St John's used to call their sixteenth-century equivalents). I shall never forget the way his lip curled when he said the word 'satire', suggesting it would somehow rival his professional patch. I had been worried that his appearance on the show (13 April 1963) had been 'wiped' but it has survived. It has the memorable line that David Frost 'wears his hair back to front'. He objected to 'the diatribe of viciousness'. Also he mentioned that you 'can't be filthy unless you have a university degree.' There they are, the forgotten figures: Reginald and Beryl Maudling, Dorothy Macmillan, Selwyn Lloyd and Harold Wilson, preserved in electronic aspic, or, to use a Pope phrase, flies in amber.

It was brilliantly contrived, because he tolerantly and indulgently suggested that cock-ups in politics were not the result of stupidity but of the pursuit of self-interest – which we can all understand and sympathise with. He claimed he was being nice, but down in ancient Pompeii his devastating performance would have got him exiled to Upper Egypt or somewhere. He said that his traditions were Variety theatre, Billy Cotton, that kind of thing.

People who don't like satire often complain that it usually offers no recipes for cure and is destructive rather than constructive. It's not satire's function though to be constructive; it's more that it is analytical and an exercise in exposure. It is part of the search for truth. John Donne asks in his Third Satire if 'railing' 'can cure these worne maladies?' The implication is probably not. And where would he, or any other satirist, be, if his operations created a universally bland and virtuous world?

He provides a challenging emblematic image for the quest for truth:

On a huge hill

*Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
And what th' hills suddennes resists, winne so;
Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,
Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night.*

An extract from *The Lighted Window*

It is dark now and the windows are lighted on the other side of the street. The evening air touches my skin with a chill like water, and bicycles whisper swiftly through the dusk. Opposite are the golden stone theatre and museum, the stone piers which support the railings crowned by giant carved heads, stirring in the shadows between the streetlamps. Beside them is the stark grandeur of Hawksmoor's Clarendon building, which is tough and melancholy and belligerent all at once. Sparse lights, reflecting upwards in deep window embrasures. Lead statues of the Muses patrol the dark roofline: pitiless executives of success and memory, genius and fame.

I start to walk home along Broad Street, past the closed gates and the concert posters, over wet leaves on slicked pavements. I glance across to Trinity College, sitting far back behind its screen of railings, beyond lawns and trees, like a country house in its autumnal park. There is a glimmer of wavering light at the bottom of the chapel windows although their keystones are in shadow—light striking upwards from the music desks. I turn south into Turl Street—the first customers are eating an early supper by candlelight in the panelled front room of the Turl Street Kitchen. How different the pale yellow of these shifting flames are from the steady white of the bulkhead lights which illuminate the bicycle racks behind the wall of Jesus College on the corner, from the bluish overhead strip lights in the porters' lodge on the other side of the street.

Reflections from streetlamps and college windows glimmer dimly on damp flagstones, brighter on wet tarmac and cobble. Now the smart shops pass: jeweller, dandy's tailor, wine merchant, the whisky shop with its window full of names from the cold uplands along the Spey. Light strikes upwards, glimmering on the unlit brass chandeliers and the high stucco ceiling of the church turned library on the corner. The windows of the Mitre glow red from little shaded lights on the panelled walls.

I cross the High Street at the lights. Then down brickly Albert Street, and round the corner by The Bear, where the lamplight is glowing on the polished wood of the bar. Out into St Aldates and threading through the crowds at the bus stops—the bright buses for Wantage and Abingdon, setting off into the damp night towards the lighted constellations of the villages and towns. I walk down the hill past the front of Christ Church, Wren's gothick tower shadowy above me, through the breath of wood smoke and refracted fire from the pizza van at the College gate, and across the wide road.

Brewer Street is dim, sheltered by the bulwark of the old city wall, lit by lanterns fixed high on the outer wall of Pembroke College, dim light only behind the coloured glass of the chapel windows. The sound and brightness of the main road falls behind with every step, more removed still as I push open the outer door of Campion Hall, a deep doorway in a lightless wall, and slide the tab against my name to IN. I think that only in this College are there three choices: IN or OUT or AWAY. Given the early history of the Jesuits in Britain it is hard not to associate AWAY with phrases like *gone beyond the seas*, or *fled to his kinsfolk in the North*.

A smell of polish and flowers and careful cooking. Past the great Spanish polychrome carving of Ignatius and his companions, through the unlit dining room with a glance at Augustus John's nervous, brilliant portrait of Fr Martin D'Arcy. Through the lobby with its paintings from Flanders and Peru, and into the library. Panelling above the broad stone fireplace, books from floor to ceiling, pools of lamplight on polished parquet. The big room is still as this quiet house grows quieter at evening. It is almost as though it grew more secluded and further away, when these lamps are lit in the library and the fire is lit in the common room. It becomes like a manor house, silent at nightfall, remote and westerly and enfolded by wooded hills. The buds of the birch tree outside the window rustle in the dark like rain, the windows in Pembroke's new building seem as far away as the lights of hill farms, dimming in memory on the slopes of the Pennines.

* * *

A star is tangled in the branches of a stone forest, one of whose trees is laden with miraculous apples. There is a unicorn under the apple tree, a lion and a lamb on the floor of the grove. A bishop is kneeling with a great book closed before him. There are hounds or wolves in the shadows. All the unknown poetry and strangeness of England seems to inhabit that one carved stone, and I can barely decipher its details by the sparse lanterns on the walls, by the dim light spilled from gothic windows. November night-fog stirs around the lighted archway, blots the light from the lodge. It is bitterly cold, damp striking up from the cobbles, frozen mist advancing across the water meadows. I have only just arrived, forty years ago and more, and it is my first evening in Oxford, indeed my first evening in England. I am with a group of musicians, one an ex-schoolfriend with whom I am staying, and we are gathering at the gateway of Merton College to go to Evensong at Christ Church.

I have never before seen anything like this narrow street, the gate-towers and postern gates, the cusped gothic of the window heads, now silhouetted against the deep yellow lamplight of the third quarter of the last century. It is wholly unlike the honeyed baroque lanes of Salamanca, the towering limewashed closes of the Old Town of Edinburgh. Light spills from the triumphal arch which is half-disclosed by the curve of the street. We pass through the lit gates and into Christ Church, and I am stopped in my tracks by the magnificence of the plaster ceiling of the lighted upper library, by the virtuosity, the extravagance of the geometric foliage, and that this whole snowy expanse is moulded, not painted as it would be anywhere else in Europe. Desk-lamps glimmer behind the irregularities of crown glass in the tall windows of Peckwater and then we dive into another tunnel of fog and stone, another tower with a lantern in the arch and dim carved images half out of sight above, and make our way into the cold vastness of Tom Quad where the fog fills the sunken basin of lawns and fountain, stirring and flowing like an otherworldly lake, throwing filaments of vapour up into the light of the lamps on the walls of the canonries, hiding the gate tower and choking the bells. When we turn under the porch of the Cathedral, the flames of the choir's candles are blurred into ghost-suns by the watery cold in the air.

All that I remember clearly from that visit is music, fog and darkness. I know that we must have walked around the city during the short days: I can almost remember waking in the half-light and going into breakfast in a dark-panelled Hall full of noisy young men in track suits and white sweaters. Smells of sweat and fatty bacon, a barked greeting of "good morning, men." I can half remember walking along a riverbank in failing afternoon light, visiting bookshops and music shops as the sky faded once more into fog and chill at the shadowy end of afternoon.

What I remember most clearly is lanterns and the tunnels of stone between quadrangles, the bright gate-lodges, islands of lamplight in the ocean of winter night. And music every evening, men's voices in freezing churches: services and concerts, some choirs still singing three-part alto-tenor-bass in a town which seemed as desolate as it was wonderful, being bereft of women. In those cold chapels my mind kept worrying back to the panel over the gate: suppose the blazing star was rather the sun come down to earth, the winter sun trapped in boughs borne down by miraculous unseasonable fruits, trees with pelicans and phoenixes nesting in their branches. Suppose it was the blood red, horizon-riding of the north. The wounded sun which recalls the unconsolated devotion of the verse:

*Now goeth sun under wode,
I pity Mary thy sweet rode,
Now goeth sun under tree,
I pity, Mary, thy Son and thee. . .*

Which recalls to me now the valley of the Hodder in dead of winter: gritstone, oaks, and holly groves; the blinding whiteness of hoar frost on the flank of Pendle.

It took the whole of a winter day's light to travel from Scotland to Oxford in those years: although my father had seen me onto the train at 8.30, the light was already weakening when I changed trains at Birmingham. It was somewhere in the southern suburbs of that city, on a bleak winter afternoon, that the train of 1970s slamstock carriages halted at a signal. The embankment looked down on a bomb-site, a triangle of land sloping to the railway, small redbrick terraces along the crest of the hill showing the first lights in their windows. There was a fire of building debris on the rubbly waste ground, a few young men in bomber jackets standing around the fire, a boy kicking a football through rusty willow herb. All of this caught and held my attention: the waste ground and the fire, and the cold cloud gathering in the sky. I thought at once how urgently I wanted to record this thing barely worth recording, and how powerless I was to do so. That moment was for me the beginning of all subsequent attempts to write about place and season, particularly about obscure and disregarded places. For many years I gave my attention to the view out, to the weather outside the window-glass, to migrating birds, to bare hills on the western horizon, but now I think increasingly of long walks at twilight, looking up at the lighted windows, at the constellations of un-knowable lives. There are so many lights in the darkening, remembered towns: church and chapel windows, flickering-bright below and dark above. There are arc lights and floodlights—goods yards and football fields. There are lighted squash courts and fives courts at night, boxes of white light and smoky breath. There are the yellow-glowing windows of the corner restaurants, rain falling, the illuminated tramcars passing softly over the cobbles in the Low Countries, years ago.

PETER DAVIDSON

Peter Davidson is a Senior Research Fellow at Campion Hall. He is editing the complete works of St Robert Southwell (forthcoming from OUP). Previous books include *The Idea of North* (Reaktion, 2005), *Distance and Memory* (Carcanet, 2013), and *The Last of the Light* (Reaktion, 2015). *The Lighted Window* will be published by Bodleian Editions.

What I have tried to do in my writing? —and my experiences of liberal values in academe

A.D. HARVEY

MORE than 98 per cent—over one million words—of the non-fiction I have had published has been under my own name. Inevitably it has contained errors and even 'howlers', but as far as has been humanly possible, despite the demoralizing conditions in which I usually had to work, it has been checked and rechecked for accuracy and clarity. The bulk of the remaining 1.6 per cent has also involved no sort of scam, other than the use of a pseudonym, a ploy adopted by any number of well-known writers. Unlike certain members of the British Academy I have never published under my own name things I have invented to back up a scholarly thesis.

I was originally a political historian, and began with a Ph.D. thesis, a couple of articles in scholarly quarterlies and a book on the politics of party in early nineteenth-century Britain. I also became interested in the relationship of

literature and society, thinking that a study of changing styles and fashions in literature might provide an accessible route to a clearer understanding of the mechanisms of social change generally. I even hoped it might be possible to achieve a bringing together of the disciplines of history and literary studies, something much talked of at one time.

Over the next twenty-five years I wrote three books on different aspects of the history/literature overlap (or four books if one includes my *Sex in Georgian England*, in which the sources cited include poetry and novels). Even more predominant than literature as a cultural form is war. I wrote two books about war (three if one includes my book on war literature), plus one on political violence, and the equivalent of a book in journal articles. In my work on the history of warfare, as with my work on

the relationship of literature and society, I explored the parallels and divergences of developments in different countries, regarding comparative analysis of this kind as a precondition of any attempt at placing investigation of these subjects on a scientific basis. My growing recognition that we simply do not know enough about the details of what happened in the past sidetracked me into bibliographical work in a number of neglected areas and into archival research that resulted in the publication of previously unknown texts by Lord Byron, Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and other writers.

One's published work should stand on its own, speak for itself. In Britain, however, a number of organizations have made it their business to try and prevent this happening. In 1978 the Historical Association's *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* mentioned me six times, noting for example that my first book, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century*, 'has been widely praised'. The same publication, in its 1992 to 1995 issues, mentioned me not once, though during this period I published *Collision of Empires: Britain in Three World Wars 1793-1945*, which according to *The Times*, showed 'astounding erudition', and *Sex in Georgian England*, which *The New Statesman* thought 'magnificently researched', and co-edited an edition of the prison diary of the political reformer John Horne Tooke which was praised in *The Times Literary Supplement*. *The Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* is on the open shelves of quite a number of larger libraries: readers don't need to ask anyone's permission to check for themselves.

One review of *Sex in Georgian England* in the national daily press described me as an 'adroit deployer of the precious scrap of hard fact', and many of these facts had not appeared in print since the early nineteenth century, but the book is not referred to in the voluminous footnotes of most of the supposedly scholarly work covering the same topic published since the appearance of the hard-back edition of my book twenty-six years ago. Ph.D. students at London University are routinely advised not to include any of my publications in the bibliographies of their dissertations: especially in cases where I have produced archival evidence contradicting the surmises or outright fabrications of earlier scholars. In effect I have been air-brushed out of the picture, like a liquidated ex-colleague in a group photo of communist leaders.

Since this sort of thing is regarded as legitimate scholarly behaviour in Britain it is perhaps not surprising that

my 700 or so applications for lecturing posts in this country were unsuccessful (though it certainly surprised senior academics at the Italian, French and German universities where I did find temporary employment).

Having always wanted to be a novelist in any case I utilized some of my unwanted leisure to write experiments in fiction, three of which were published as novels and others as short stories: some of the latter also appeared in Italian, German and Japanese translations. In my late forties I also began to have my poems posted up on London buses, and some of these poems later appeared in magazines. Like other writers in the second half of the twentieth century I experimented with mixing fact and fiction, and had the idea of producing a short story that existed only in the summaries and short extracts appearing in a scholarly article about it (see *Critical Survey* vol.5 no.1, 1993). My now famous Dostoevsky-meets-Dickens piece in *The Dickensian* (vol.98 part 3, 2002), like the more recent 'The Invisible Robe', the Hans Christian Andersen spoof in *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 February 2014) was a variation on this theme, though these two pieces may be regarded as *hommages* to the writers in question. Of course, if I had found somewhere to publish these *hommages* under my own name, the immediate response would have been that they were nothing at all like Dickens or Hans Christian Andersen and that they would not fool anyone for an instant.

I might say here that the Hans Christian Andersen *homage* was in no sense conceived as revenge on *The Times Literary Supplement* for printing Eric Naiman's hatchet job on me in 2013. The latter might have been seen as a standing invitation to respond in an appropriate manner, especially as it inspired the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* to pull an article of mine after I had completely rewritten it according to their requirements, and corrected the proofs, but as one of Elmore Leonard's characters says 'Revenge is for losers, guys that got nothing else to do'. In fact I only sent the Hans Christian Andersen skit to *The Times Literary Supplement* after half a dozen publications with larger circulations had shown no interest.

As for the notion that my occasional spoofs undermine scholarship, well, that rather depends on whether or not one regards the concepts 'scholarship' and 'ganging up on someone with a better publication record' as synonymous.

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers.
The content of *Oxford Magazine* relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors' desk and is usually published as received.

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Wild Raspberries

The raspberry you want the most
is always the hardest to reach.
The plumpest, pinkest, sweetest
is forever flanked by a squad
of nettles; gripped in a briared fist;
bobbing breezily on the tip of a cane
above a long drop; secreted beneath
a toothed leaf while, unbeknown to you
a wasp has staked its incontestable claim.
Ignore the hard and green, the pulpy,
shrivelled, spoiled. Dozens, just as
delicious as the one you have your eye on
are there for the taking. Extend a finger
and thumb—this one, that? It's yours.
But whichever you choose, whichever
yields its juicy drupelets to your tongue,
know that it is not and never will be
the raspberry you want the most.

Month of Sundays

When the only company you keep is your own
and intimacy is classed as a criminal offence;
when there's no more hugging or kissing,
and the only safe sex is virtual—or *solitaire*;

when a table for one is all you can hope for
and the dress code is *come as you are*; when,
for a month of Sundays, you put on—who knows—
and make an entrance early or late—who cares;

when you greet yourself as a long-lost friend;
buttonhole your mirror image; flatter it, flirt with it,
laugh at your own jokes, talk nineteen to the dozen;
pat yourself on the back: a model host, model guest;

when the party's over, you see yourself out,
thank yourself for coming, bid a fond farewell
to your retreating shadow; close the door
on the night sky's oh-so-distant constellations.

DILYS ROSE

Dilys Rose is a novelist, short story writer and poet. She has published eight books of fiction and four of poetry, most recently the novel *Unspeakable* (Freight, 2017), a fact-based fiction set in seventeenth-century Edinburgh, and a pamphlet of poems, *Stone the Crows* (Mariscat Press, 2020). For nearly twenty years she taught Creative Writing on postgraduate programmes at the Universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde and Edinburgh.

Surrendered Skies*

The boardroom naysayers dub it *dull*,
bland, *safe* but those in favour win the day
with *calm*, *serene*, *goes with anything*—
what most folk want from their walls.
Creatives, colour gurus, marketing bods
and lawyers pass it, christen the tin
and then, as ever, wet the baby's head.
But no boardroom buzzwords match
these skies: the slow glum churn, the
relentless simmer of woebegone grey.
All colour covered by coat upon coat
of cloud. Where's my rosy dawn, my
forget-me-not morning, periwinkle afternoon?
Where's my marigold sunset, my lavender
dusk? Wary, the birds hug the treetops,
skim the chimneys, as if the sky's
capitulation could well be contagious.

* A Dulux paint name

NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description—e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence bio.

REVIEWS

Our own personal Enlightenment

Richie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-179*, Allen Lane, 2020.



Around 1980, during a conference in Cambridge on the early history of political economy, I sat at dinner next to the German intellectual historian Hans Erich Bödeker. In the midst of some general chat about the state of things, he asked me whether in England people at large had lost faith in the Enlightenment. Taken by surprise, I said tentatively that I didn't think most people in England had a view on the Enlightenment either way: the thing, or concept, simply didn't have that sort of place in our culture.

Forty years later, I still think that's broadly true. Newton and Smith may be names to conjure with, but I doubt that they're generally thought of as Enlightenment intellectuals; Hume, Gibbon and Godwin don't have a place in our national story remotely comparable to that occupied by Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau in France. There have been changes. The Enlightenment has a larger presence in British public culture than it had in the last century. One's more likely to encounter it in TV history programmes, or in the text framing exhibitions, moreover as a feature of our own and not just other nations' history—even if one's still more likely to encounter representations of the period foregrounding court intrigue, or ballroom belles, or indeed the East India Company, or the slave trade. Awareness of there being a case against 'the Enlightenment project' has spread too, whether in its postmodern, or, more widely, in its post-colonial form.

Richie Robertson's huge but readable Allen Lane/Penguin tome in some ways reflects these changes. The commissioning editor—who, by the author's account, took a close interest in the shaping of the book—must have believed there to be an anglophone reading public with an appetite for an 800-page-odd survey on this theme (and its respectful reception by the broadsheets suggests that he was right about that, or at least that quite a few readers will be persuaded that this is something that they should have read). And if this loosely-centred book has an overall mission, both I and its other reviewers take that to be to dispel the various newish forms of suspicion or disdain that may attach to the category.

The book occasionally argues its case

in this regard. Yes, Hume wrote an objectionable racist footnote, and refused to retract it—but that isn't all that there was to Hume, or to the Enlightenment. Indeed some of his peers objected to what he said too—otherwise the question of retraction wouldn't have arisen. 'Enlighteners' (as Robertson calls them, Englishing the German *Aufklärer*) didn't, he readily concedes, get everything right. But nor did they adhere to any single set of dogmas. On the contrary, they were always questioning and arguing. We may still find value in some of the ideas they came up with, but above all it's their spirit of enquiry, and their (admittedly uneven) openness to diverse voices that entitles these thinkers to our notice and respect.

Overall, the book develops this case not so much by explicit argument, as by the way in which it proceeds. What we're offered here is, in effect, a reader's guide to the Enlightenment, one that takes us through the writings in which ideas were advanced and thrashed out. A striking number of pages are devoted to summaries of key or otherwise illuminating texts. And all the illustrations are of title pages of books. Robertson puts us in a position to hear these authors' voices, their concordances and discordances. And, as we hear them, he's there with us, or just in front of us, listening, responding. I think this approach works quite well. The texts aren't too mediated—we get quite close to them. But they are mediated, by an informed, affable, reflective persona, who tells us what strikes him, and sometimes enlarges on what seems to him more or less sensible and usable in what he's read. He's our own personal Enlightenment.

I don't think the book's overarching argument is primarily addressed to scholars in the field—more to a wider public, or scholars in adjacent fields. Because scholars who work on the Enlightenment already know how polyphonic it was. But they're not ignored: their work deeply shapes this account. Notably, it underpins many of the book's second-level interpretative positions. Thus, its conception of the Enlightenment as a European, and not a distinctively French phenomenon, and its insistence on the importance of religion as a context in which Enlightenmenters worked, critically but also very often sympathetically, with the aim of reforming rather than obliterating. It's striking that the book has more chapters on religion than on science. Also, last but not least, Robertson goes with the trend of scholarship when he downplays the notion of an 'age of reason'. Not merely was reason, when lauded, lauded more as critical instrument than as source of certainty, but also, through the

century, its dependence on emotion was increasingly stressed. Emotion motivated, coloured and was itself a source of insight. The Enlightenment science of man was a science of an only partly rational being.

Others of the book's features are more idiosyncratic, reflecting the author's specific knowledge and interests, or the consequences of the way he set about writing it. The Enlightenment as conceived here was an intermeshed assemblage of relatively formally developed ideas. It didn't inhere primarily in widely held, let alone popular attitudes and beliefs, though its thinkers were aligned with some broader currents in thought; putatively enlightened rulers are exceptional among non-authors in being given attention (and actually some of them did present themselves as authors, notably Frederick II of Prussia, but also Catherine II of Russia, with her propagandistic *Nakaz*). Scholars have done an enormous amount of work in recent decades on the infrastructure of Enlightenment—correspondence, publications, translations, libraries, academies, societies, universities (sometimes), discussion groups and salons. We hear something about this infrastructure here, but as context, not as a major focus of interest in its own right. Again, what is surveyed here is a pan-European Enlightenment, extending to North America; other parts of the world feature only as objects of enquiry—whereas some scholars have started trying to bring them into the story in other ways. Given that the author is a professor of German, it's not surprising, though it's a merit of the book, that among Europeans he aimed from the start to give Germany as much attention as England and France. It's noteworthy too, though, that he gives equal weight only to these three. Italy receives a fair amount of attention (Robertson thinks more in terms of language-regions than petty states, so feels free to write about 'Germany' and 'Italy'). Thinkers and writers from other places—Dalmatia, Switzerland, Finland—make interesting cameo appearances. The Netherlands, however, plays quite a small part, and Spain seems almost entirely absent, as if perceived only through the haze of its 'Black Legend' (Charles III isn't among the enlightened rulers investigated). These limits to the book's vision probably stem partly from the author's 'Reader's Guide' approach, which allows him to treat equally only works in languages he can comfortably read.

Robertson is a literary scholar—which may help to explain his very textual approach. But that feature of his background probably also helps to explain some of the book's other distinctive and attractive features. Thus, the generic breadth of the texts

it covers: here, novels, plays and poems feature alongside essays and treatises. At a recent discussion of the book (on which more in a moment), the historian Anthony La Vopa singled out for special praise the chapter in which Robertson explores in turn Richardson's *Clarissa*, Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*, and Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, and makes them speak to one another.

The book's chapters each focus on a different theme about which Enlighteners thought. Sometimes the chapters are a bit miscellaneous, as the book seems to strain for almost encyclopedic coverage. But all in their various ways provide helpful introductions, sometimes excellent introductions, to thought and debate around the given theme. One chapter is devoted to Aesthetics; not a common topic in historical surveys, so the more welcome here.

If the book's overarching message is primarily aimed at non-specialists, and much of what it says (inevitably) summarises recent scholarship, does it nonetheless have something distinctive to say to historians and literary scholars whose own work focuses on the period? And what will they make of it? An opportunity to test this was provided by a recent panel discussion, organized by Oxford's interdisciplinary (though mainly historical and literary) 'Enlightenment Workshop', a seminar that's run during two terms of each year for some thirty years, for most of those years on the premises of the Voltaire Foundation in the Banbury Road. Its establishment around 1990, and flourishing since, illustrates once again the rising trajectory of 'the Enlightenment' in British life. The Workshop's range and character also testify to changing conceptions. Voltaire may be the tutelary genius of the place (his bust stands on the mantelpiece in the seminar room), but he presides over notably geographically and thematically varied terrain. It's suggestive of this diversification that the Foundation's long-running publication series, *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, has recently been rebranded *Oxford Studies in the Enlightenment*.

When the pandemic first raged last year, the Workshop shut up shop. This year it has reconvened, though now of course online. The panel discussion of Ritchie Robertson's book, followed by his impromptu response, and open discussion, marked the Workshop's first meeting in the new format. As we've all repeatedly seen during the pandemic, the online format has benefits as well as costs. In this case it opened the way to an audience of unprecedented size: some 120 people watched the discussion live (only one fifth of those from within Oxford). Following its first airing, the YouTube recording was started by several hundred more people (though some didn't linger long). At the same time, habitual attendees reported feeling uncomfortably distanced from the proceedings—and anonymized, as questions they posed were

passed through a moderator who didn't report (probably scarcely had the chance to register) their names.

There were three speakers on the panel. I started things off. I'm an Oxford historian, a specialist in the period but not primarily in its intellectual life. The other speakers were Karen O'Brien, another Oxford scholar, in her case of English literature, and Anthony La Vopa, an American historian of German social and cultural history, who has presented at the Workshop in the past (indeed, his last book *The Labor of the Mind: Intellect and Gender in Enlightenment Cultures*, was the subject of an earlier panel discussion); in this instance he spoke from his home base in the States. Like the author, the panellists are literary and historical in scholarly orientation, not, for instance, philosophical; indeed, none of the panelists would (I guess) characterize themselves even as intellectual historians. This made it likely that they would approach the book essentially on the author's own terrain.

The normal inclination of any reviewer is to find things to praise and things to criticize. All the panellists spoke warmly of the book's range and lucidity. But all were also struck by some things the author doesn't do.

I noted, thus, that the book does strikingly little with an issue that has loomed large in the more general scholarly literature in recent decades: the definitional question, What do we mean by 'the Enlightenment'? What's the case for using such a term, and for applying it to particular times, places and people? Jonathan Israel, in his several books (2001-) which play up the foundational role of the Dutch and distinguish a 'radical' from a 'moderate' enlightenment, has offered one notable answer to these questions; John Robertson, in his *The Case for the Enlightenment* (2005), which uses the cases of Scotland and Naples to explore differences in modes of participation in common debates, offers a different vision; Dan Edelstein, in *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (2010), adopts an entirely different approach, looking at how some thinkers and writers, initially in France, came to represent themselves and their age as 'enlightened'. My own view, partly intuitive, partly arising from this scholarship, is that we never will agree on the character and boundaries of an entity termed 'the Enlightenment'. But the category is not just difficult to ditch, it also has heuristic use. Several different accounts of 'the Enlightenment' each in their own way help us to discern patterns, and to frame worthwhile questions. But even if (as I think), it's acceptable to mix and match frameworks of reference, yet still (I would maintain) we need to be aware of which one we're employing at any given time, and what its limitations are.

It's not obvious that Ritchie Robertson agrees with this. He seems happy to

dub people 'Enlighteners' without making clear on what basis he does that, and sometimes he reifies the Enlightenment: tells us for example that 'the Enlightenment agreed' on some point. At some level this doesn't matter very much; it's a mode of writing; he's mostly concerned to give content to things that fall within generally accepted 'Enlightenment' parameters. Still, if there's no clarity about criteria, the status of claims about what the Enlightened thought remains radically unclear. Do they amount to a definition of Enlightenment—are they specifying a criterion? Or are such statements synthetic, telling us something empirically verifiable about a set of people judged by other, unspecified criteria to be enlightened? Or are we being told that there was a general consensus among all serious thinkers at this time: is 'Enlightenment' operating in this instance just as the name of a period? If you're the kind of reader who asks yourself questions like these, you'll be left fretting, because they won't be answered. Responding to this comment, the author said that he felt enough had been written about those issues by others, and it would be boring to harp on about them. Fair enough. I'm sure he has a point. Personally, I do fret a bit about such things.

I also noted some fuzziness in the book's treatment of the Enlightenment's legacies. The book's terminal date is 1790, though in fact it carries its account through the French Revolutionary Terror, that is, to 1794 (but not to post-Terror phases of the Revolution). What's the argument for stopping precisely there, or indeed approximately there? In what senses were early nineteenth-century thinkers and rulers continuators of Enlightenment, or its heirs, and in what senses not? Like many other writers on the topic, Robertson doesn't argue the case for stopping where he does; he just stops. He often uses Kant's critical comments on enlightened traditions of thought to wrap up discussions, though—which might seem to imply that things did take a new direction in the last decades of the century, that is, not just because of the Revolution but also because of other shifts in thought. But then, in what sense and through what causal chain are we heirs to the Enlightenment, as the author often implies that we are? All this remains unclear.

Karen O'Brien in her comments picked up on another major theme of the book, the subject of its subtitle, indeed: *The pursuit of happiness*. She noted that, as in other respects, and entirely legitimately, Ritchie Robertson builds on themes in recent scholarship. She suggested, however, that while the theme works convincingly as a recurrent motif, arguably—given the central role it's assigned—it should have been given more analytical and discriminating attention. Robertson occasionally hints that there were a number of very different conceptions of happiness around

(this emerges, for instance, in his account of ideas about punishment). But not much is made of these distinctions, or their implications for how thinkers subsequently diverged.

Tony La Vopa expressed appreciation especially of the book's dialogic staging: the very suggestive way in which it brings different texts into conversation with each other. But he too noted some omissions which struck him as important. He said he was surprised that the book didn't say more about the modern social theorists who have been among the Enlightenment's most influential recent critics and interpreters: Horkheimer and Adorno; Foucault; Habermas. They're noted, but briefly, and scarcely directly engaged with. The author explained that he had initially written more about Habermas at least, but his editor thought that this section should be cut. La Vopa also suggested that something important gets missed if one doesn't say much about the Enlightenment's penetration into everyday life. Inasmuch as Enlighteners engaged with religion, for example, they engaged with institutions, concepts and practices which touched people's lives very deeply, for example, through the institution of marriage.

In his response, Ritchie Robertson largely agreed with panellists' characterization of what the book does and doesn't

do, while defending or at least explaining his choices in terms of his own interests and his vision of the book's mission. He said, remarkably, that this massive, very learned and very lucid book had been easy to write. His editor, Stuart Profit, had somehow discerned that he had it in him, and, confronted with that proposition, he had found that it was true.

In the brief question period that followed, one of the most consequential questions came, to my mind, from the Hungarian historian László Kontler (though it came to Robertson and the panel in anonymous form; only YouTube watchers could see who asked what question). Kontler in his work has been preoccupied with the shape of the Enlightenment across the map: the different forms it took in different places; in what ways differently located thinkers interacted, and in what ways they cross-fertilised. One can't rise far above the very particular in that line of enquiry without having to think hard about what one might mean by 'Enlightenment', in a context in which one's going to want simultaneously to recognize some kind of unity and to admit difference. Kontler asked if chronologies of Enlightenment differ depending on one's geographical focus. But this, like other definitional and demarcational issues, largely lies outside the agenda of Ritchie Robertson's book.

Because the book doesn't engage very directly with scholarly arguments, it's not clear that it will reshape how scholars think about their subject. But who knows, perhaps it will, precisely by going around the back of those arguments, and implicitly at least posing new questions, which may help to shape the way a new generation, who grow up with this book, will think.

As to the place that Enlightenment occupies in our public culture: will it get caught up in the culture wars which politicians are reportedly pondering whether to stir up for political gain? Anything is possible, but this doesn't look likely to me. It may figure in the occasional scrap, as over whether or not we should blacklist Hume. But by and large, wider dissemination of the notion that the Enlightenment was an important phase in history has, as I've noted, been associated with the diversification and geographical extension of the term's scope. With any luck, we'll keep seeing it as polyphonic, and all of us will find Enlighteners that we want to argue for, as well as ones that we want to argue with. Ritchie Robertson's book—even if it doesn't push diversification and geographical extension to anything like their limits—should help to advance this cause.

JOANNA INNES

An easier solution

Sir – Many will sympathise with Peter Oppenheimer's suggestion, in your previous issue ('What to do about the Vice-Chancellorship?', *Oxford Magazine*, No. 428, 2nd week, HT 2021), to chop-up the post of Vice-Chancellor into between two and four equal-status positions.

Surely, though, there is an easier solution to our problems. Can we not simply appoint Oppenheimer as Vice-Chancellor, by acclamation, and for life?

Yours sincerely

GRANT TAPSELL

Lady Margaret Hall

Kenneth Clark, Ruskin and Turner

Sir – I really enjoyed Bernard Richards on Kenneth Clark, Ruskin and the 'Motive' (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 428, 2nd Week, HT 2021). I too was at the Playhouse for Clark's lecture 'The Ecstatic Spiral'; you turned up early in the Beaumont Street queue to be sure of a seat when Edgar Wind

TO THE EDITOR

or Clark talked about paintings; it was the high point of the week. This was only partly for the wonderful slides in the darkness; at the Schools, though there were a few surviving 'Heldentenors of the Lecture Hall' of W. H. Auden's undergraduate days, and some dons for whom one felt affection, library voices mostly delivered notes and queries.

Brought up in North Oxford, I vividly recall the discontents of donnish households: the High Table nights when wives left at home cooked a North Parade egg or two, but also the petty envy the dons felt for Wind and Clark, aware of their own lacklustre—they said Art professors have all day to research and prepare their lectures without the drudgery and wasted time of tutorials. One told me he wished he could get away with not turning up in his College

rooms for tutorial hours but leaving a tape-recorder message from behind a bookcase for the undergraduate, "That was really very good, Christopher. Next week I want you to write about the effect of Richardson's use of epistolary form on *Clarissa*."

For me those Playhouse lectures engendered happy decades as an amateur of art history trying to know and understand the literary allusions in nineteenth-century images by British artists, especially Turner. The Art Historians I knew were not interested in the many books the artists read, but only in theory, form and influence; a Courtauld friend sneered at me, accurately, saying "*Subject* is important to you in a painting, Jan". Artistic images also informed texts, and 'The Ecstatic Spiral' stayed with me through constant reading of works by W.B. Yeats with his heady symbolic vocabulary of gyres, midnight spirits dancing on the Emperor's marble pavements, cabalistic triangles, alchemical flames, paintings by Gustave Moreau and so on.

One footnote to Richards. He tells us that when the splendid Ashmolean Turner watercolour *Rietz near Saumur* (a gift from Ruskin) was 'translated' into an engraved

illustration for Turner's *Annual Tour: Wanderings by the Loire* (1833, the first of two volumes of *The Rivers of France*) it was Robert Brandard the engraver himself who added boats to Turner's original image. The boats would have been added by Turner himself during the habitual process of demanding four or five times, or as often as necessary, 'proofs' from engravers as their work progressed, before he finally approved a plate for publication; he 'touched,' as it was called, these interim impressions printed from the steel plates, by adding or changing features in pencil or chalk, and writing instructions in the margin before sending the proofs back them to his engravers. Often he had the balance of the *chiaroscuro* in view; or he might improve the clouds; in one case he made a marginal drawing to insist on a more clear outline for a fiddle.

An example from the same *Loire* series is W. R. Smith's plate of *Château of Amboise* after the Ashmolean watercolour: Turner wrote on a surviving 'touched' proof asking for 'more cross-work' on the masonry to appear 'more like layers of stone.' In other publishing enterprises he sketched a bird's nest to add in a foreground branch of a tree, and wrote, 'put me in innumerable figures here' for his *Paradise Lost* illustration 'Fall of the Rebel Angels.' Once or twice he added birds to conceal flaws in the engraver's steel plate.

It was a bore to 'burnish out' a section of the plate to engrave new lines on it, and the 'touched proofs' of course were a major annoyance for the engravers who were paid as little as Turner or his publishers could get away with, but most of them adored Turner, and these corrections were something of an academy to them all. They would spend months of monk-like long days on a single engraving. Turner declared there was only one engraving of his work from the many hundreds made by those great artists to which he made no change at all in the course of seeing stages of the man's work: the superb plate of his *Loch Coriskin*, a view on Skye made by Henry Le Keux (in 1834) to illustrate Scott's poems.

Turner added boats a second time in *The Rivers of France* to improve the composition and atmosphere of a print. To *St. Germain's*, in the *Wanderings by the Seine*, as one can see by comparing the engraving by J. B. Allen (1835) with the original watercolour (Tate Britain, Turner Bequest CCLIX. 122), he added four new sailing-boats on the river.

On Fridays in Oxford it was always raining, and we queued at the Scala in Walton Street for a gloomy Divine Service of a Bergman film.

Yours sincerely

JAN PIGGOTT

Exhibitioner,

Magdalen College, 1959-62.

The angelic messenger

Sir – The review in your last issue, by the prolific OM contributor the Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College, Dr Bernard Richards, invites a further sprinkle of star dust in the form of a photograph. It is of the apogee of the west doorway of the University Museum, as lit up on a golden summer's eve.



The angelic messenger brings both book (in the right hand) and cells (in the left), just as Richards suggests. The cells, however, merit particular attention – the lower cell is shown to possess two nuclei – undoubtedly the cell is in mitosis, it is dividing: '*omnis cellula e cellula*' ('all cells come from cells') as Rudolph Virchow ('the Pope of medicine') has it. How, and why, as early as 1859, might such a fundamental biological insight have been chosen to adorn this critical carving, dominant as it is over the entrance to Oxford's magnificent edifice to science?

I think that John Goodsir's (1814-1867) published lectures of 1845 were likely to have been the connecting thread, since Goodsir, at that point Edinburgh's new Professor of Anatomy, was a gifted microscopist and was moreover the individual identified by Virchow as the real discoverer of the cell theory (as shown through Virchow's dedication to Goodsir of his own (1858) masterwork). And it was Goodsir (who, with his brothers and friends in Edinburgh, set up around 1842 the 'Universal brotherhood of friends of Truth' that hoped to bring science and revealed religion into harmony.

Henry Acland, the driving spirit responsible for the building of the Oxford Museum, would not have wished for less. Oxford the eternal home of lost causes?.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD BOYD

Oxford

Scrutiny and Participation

Sir – While I completely agree that the current situation renders checks and balances on the University 'authorities' more difficult than usual (Editorial, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 427, 0th Week, HT 2021), I would note that Proctors and Assessor continue to attend all meetings (including those of the Silver Group) online. I am sure that the current Proctors and Assessor are exercising their duty of scrutiny on behalf of Congregation in the current difficult circumstances, just as the previous teams did.

An important committee which is very seldom mentioned is the *Audit and Scrutiny Committee* (where the Proctors and Assessor all have a significant voice). At least one Council member elected by Congregation attends the committee meetings, plus the Proctors and Assessor. The committee regularly reports to Council, including in a yearly report where the departing Proctors and Assessor give their views. In addition to very active and helpful external members, other members are elected directly on the committee by Congregation.

The *Oxford Magazine* has a role to play in promoting representation on the University Committees. I was shocked that last December, there were insufficient numbers of candidates, notably to such a committee as *Audit and Scrutiny* (see <https://governance.web.ox.ac.uk/event/elections-by-congregation-audit-scrutiny-committee-humanities-social-sciences-mt-2020>).

When I was Junior Proctor (2019-20), my colleagues and I advocated for a better system for advertising positions online and for online voting. I was happy to see that the Elections Office sent emails last December to inform people about voting and about vacancies. Maybe the fact that many things have had to migrate online by *par la force des choses* has been good for this particular case.

Participation, scrutiny and advocacy are possible in our university and this was very much the sentiment of my departing oration last year; as I stated:

'Institutions such as universities do not lack in clear principles, ethical policies and mechanism for self-scrutiny, but sometimes in the courage to apply them at both an individual and institutional level. That Oxford created and is maintaining the proctorship and its role of scrutiny is a testimony to its vision and courage, and it was therefore an honour for me to represent the Congregation in this office.'

I stand by this and I would like colleagues to participate more in our university governance as their voices are vital. As Martin Maiden said in his oration as Senior Proctor last year,

'We must use our democratic structures more effectively and reform Congregation procedures. Appropriate use of technology can enable members to participate more effectively in decision-making. 'The Masters', which no longer means only academics, need to lead the decision-making processes as they are the community that, collectively, best understands the challenges and needs that we share.'

Yours sincerely
SOPHIE MARNETTE
Balliol

Effective Scrutiny

Sir – Those of us who keep an eye on the doings of both Oxford and Cambridge cannot help noticing the contrast between the openness of the activities of Oxford's Audit and Scrutiny and Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny.

There are constitutional reasons for that. While Cambridge's Audit Committee is merely a committee of Council, Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny has its own place in Statute A. It is made up of the four Proctors and Pro-Proctors and eight elected members of the Regent House. The Statute requires Cambridge's Board of Scrutiny to 'scrutinize on behalf of the Regent House' not the Council and to publish an annual Report to the University openly in the Reporter. The Minutes of its meetings are also on the open web. Anyone interested may see at <https://www.scrutiny.cam.ac.uk/>.¹

The Board's independence of Council has proved to be important. As a Council member at the time I remember a discussion during which an attempt was made to have the Board of Scrutiny closed down in its early years. Only once, also when I was on the Council, did the Council seek to send the Board's Report back for some redrafting. The Board commented on the significant consequences of the resulting delay in its eventually published Report:

'The Board completed its Fifth Report on 8 June 2000, before the CAPSA implementation date. The Council, citing alleged factual inaccuracies, prevented the publication of the

Board's Report to the Regent House until 4 October 2000, by which time the deficiencies of the system had become obvious to the whole University.'

Meanwhile that September a Discussion on a Topic of Concern was called on the CAPSA crisis and the Council approved for publication a Notice 'recognizing the widespread concern in the University'. There has been no further attempt at interference with the Board's Reports.

In summer 2020 the Board took action to bring to an end the suspension of the University's governance during the Covid-19 'emergency'. It:

*'wrote to the Council's Business Committee on 23 May to raise its concerns with respect to the suspension of the publication of the Reporter and the concomitant implications for governance. The Board was concerned that whilst there had been numerous communications from the Vice-Chancellor to staff and students, there had been no account in the form of a Notice to inform the Regent House of the pertinent decisions that have been made under delegated authority and no attempt, by the publication of Graces, to obtain any retrospective authority for those decisions.'*²

The 'decisions' were then published, along with some Graces; the Reporter reappeared and a way was found to restart Discussions.

While Oxford's Audit and Scrutiny has only a decade and a half of experience, the Board of Scrutiny's Reports have now reached twenty-five in number, with this year's Report needing a supplementary once the Covid-19 financial situation became clearer. This Supplementary Report appeared as a Report to the University in the Reporter of 27 January 2021, the same issue as the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council.

The Board's Report (but not that of the Audit Committee) automatically came up for Discussion in Regent House on 9 February. Speaker after speaker had been struck by the Board's observation that the financial impact of the Covid crisis had been 'more

or less negligible', though the hypothesis that it would be very serious had resulted in the suspension of almost all reward and progression schemes, including Academic Career Pathways (previously the Senior Academic Promotions process) in 2020–21. There were strong calls for something to be done about this.

¹ The Cambridge BoS and its doings are public to the world. Nothing is behind Cambridge's equivalent of Oxford's SSO.

² Speech of the Chair, Discussion of 14 July, published in Reporter, 29 July, 2020.

Yours sincerely
G.R. EVANS
Oxford

Fake News

Sir – I apologise with handwringing and an abundance of tears for a piece of misinformation contained in my recent Letter (Oxford Magazine, No. 428, 2nd Week, HT 2021), on the subject of the Oxford Vaccine and a 'Double First' for Oxford medicine.

In my mention of our first 'First', namely, that of penicillin in 1941, I spoke of 'Hugh' Florey. This was, of course, an error, as Florey's Christian name was Howard. It was a pure slip on my part, especially as I discuss Howard Florey, along with his colleagues Ernst Chain and Norman Heatley and their world-changing development of antibiotics, in my *'Physicians, Plagues, and Progress'* of 2016.

But the error was pointed out to me after the event, and I apologise profusely for my sin. *Hinc illae lacrimae*.

Nonetheless, let us give three rousing cheers for our present-day virus-beating team at the Jenner Institute, and our second 'First.'

Yours sincerely
ALLAN CHAPMAN
History Faculty

Meanwhile, an update on the Magazine's new scheme for inviting questions from staff members on matters of concern to them for forwarding to Wellington Square for authoritative answers. So far we have forwarded three questions. As yet we have received no answers.

Questions and answers will be published in our new Q&A column as soon as possible; answers will be forwarded to questioners themselves as soon as they are received. We remind readers that their names will only be revealed to Wellington Square or published in the Q&A column with their prior agreement, in order to allow greater freedom for staff to raise controversial or sensitive issues with safety.

Please send us your questions.

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